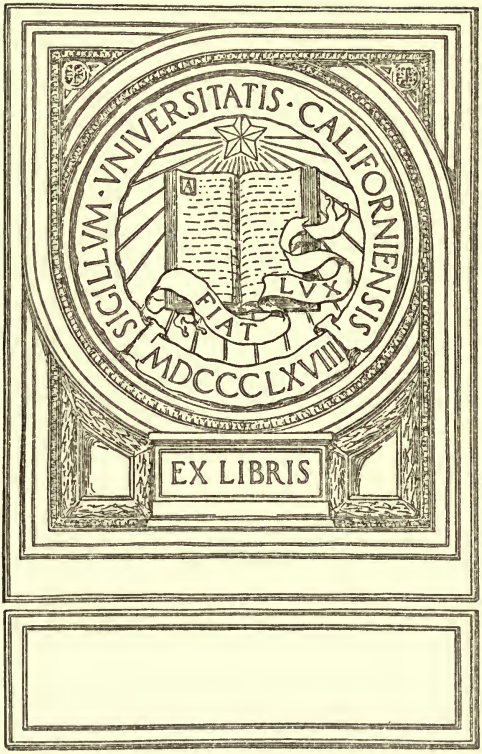
TWO PLAYS OF ISRAEL

DAVID OF BETHLEHEM
MARY MAGDALEN

By FLORENCE WILKINSON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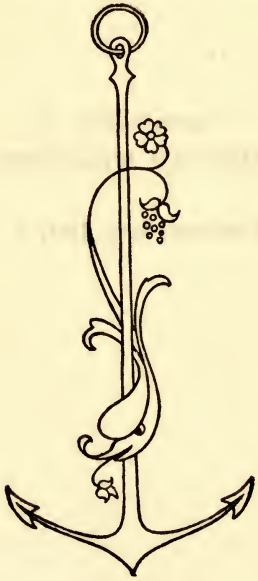

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DAVID OF BETHLEHEM

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE: The Well of Bethlehem.

ACT TWO

SCENE I: The Garden at Gibeah.

SCENE II: Witch of Endor's House.

ACT THREE

SCENE: Room in Saul's Palace.

ACT FOUR

SCENE I: The Tabernacle.

SCENE II: Cave of Adullam.

ACT FIVE

SCENE: The Walls of Gath.

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PERSONS

DAVID
SAUL
AHINOAM
JONATHAN
MERAB
MICHAL
JESSE
DAVID'S MOTHER
ELIAB, ABINADAB, SHAMMAH . . . . . Brothers of DAVID
SAMUEL
ADRIEL
PHALTIEL
DOEG
BITHIAH
AMASA, ASAHEL . . . . . Nephews of DAVID
AGAG . . . . . King of Amalek
HURAI
ELEAZER
ACHISH . . . . . King of Gath
WITCH OF ENDOR
ASSHUR . . . . . A priest
EGLAH . . . . . A Philistine woman

Youths, Maidens, Courtiers, Servants, Heralds,
Priests, Levites, Philistines, Israelites.

ACT I

SCENE I: *A sweep of hill-side in the country. David's well, stone-coped, is in the shade of a great oak-tree. In the distance are the receding blue ranges. The white-roofed village of Bethlehem with its surrounding walls is glimpsed in a fold of the hills. A wooded path,* L, *with one practical exit back-stage. Two exits right.* 1 E R *leading up the mountain and continued on the scene to give the effect of great distance.* 2 E R *past a palm-tree to Bethlehem.*

A triumphal procession enters from L.

FIRST HERALD

coming from L *alone*

Prepare ye the way!

He blows on a silver trumpet.

SECOND HERALD

blowing on his trumpet

Prepare ye the way!

FIRST YOUTH

He hath smitten the enemies of Jehovah.

SECOND YOUTH

He hath laid low them that put us to scorn.

PROCESSION OF YOUTHS *chanting*

He hath scattered them,
Like grass of the field they are withered,
Like flowers they are brought to nought.

HERALDS

Prepare ye the way!

Shouting heard in distance. Two snow-white oxen, garlanded, form part of the procession that now enters from L. DOEG *leads them. Soldiers as from the field of battle. Shouting and huzzas.*

YOUTHS *chanting*

He hath brought the enemy to nought.
He hath put him in subjection.
Lo, even to the gates of Gibeah doth he come nigh,
And he who troubled Israel weareth the yoke.

ALL

Huzza, huzza!

HERALDS

Prepare ye the way!

SOLDIERS

Saul, Saul!

Enter soldiers bearing glittering burdens, spoil from the conquered. AGAG *the captive king comes last, bound in chains and alone, a sullen, wolfish man. As he appears, all utter cries of derision. The procession is now at rest, massed up-stage.*

AGAG *standing alone*

Ye dogs of Israel!

A soldier silences him with threatening gesture. Two young lads, clad in white, bearing banners with device of BENJAMIN, *run lightly across the foreground. Applause. The people fall back, forming a hollow square.*

ADRIEL *a courtly exquisite*

Behold, our king!

DOEG

A red-bearded, crafty man

The c-conqueror.

PEOPLE

Saul, Saul, all hail!

Enter L SAUL *and* JONATHAN. SAUL *is a kingly figure of great stature, with unfathomable melan-*

choly in his look. JONATHAN *a frank, simple youth.*

DOEG

The p-prince beloved!

PEOPLE

Saul and Jonathan! Jonathan and Saul! All hail!

AGAG

Howling hyenas:

People utter menacing cries, start forward.

SAUL *raising his hand*

Peace, leave him alone! Has he not suffered enough?

Enter L AHINOAM, SAUL'S *wife,* MERAB *and* MICHAL *his daughters, and* BITHIAH *their Ethiopian serving-maid. Greetings pass between them and* SAUL *and* JONATHAN. *They stand in a group* C *down-stage.* JONATHAN *and* MICHAL *linked arm in arm.* ADRIEL *by* MERAB *his wife, and* SAUL *and* AHINOAM *together.*

SAUL

Here shall we rest and wait for the prophet Samuel.

People utter cries of dissatisfaction.

AHINOAM

A proud woman of scornful mien, with lip habitually curled.

Why do the people murmur?

VOICES

A sacrifice, a sacrifice!

AHINOAM *to* SAUL

You shall be our high priest.

SAUL

Jehovah forbid! Far be it from me to stand in the prophet's place.

AHINOAM *to* JONATHAN

Beseech your father that he make the sacrifice.

JONATHAN

It is forbidden him, mother.

MICHAL

She is a wild timid dark-eyed creature, half gazelle, half leopard in her couchant intensity.

It is for Samuel the prophet.

AHINOAM

Victory is ours. It is also ours to celebrate.

The people show signs of uneasiness, swaying backward and forward and murmuring among themselves.

VOICE

Saul is afraid.

AHINOAM

scoffingly to SAUL

It may be the gray-beard prophet is asleep, for he is old and weary.

AGAG

taking advantage of the confusion

Starved jackals!

AHINOAM

Or mayhap he hath stumbled, for his feet are infirm.

MERAB

She is MICHAL'S *older sister, with a wealth of ruddy beauty and a placid abundance of good-will.*

The flowers are withering.

ADRIEL

Soon the sun will set.

AHINOAM *to* SAUL

My lord, the people murmur.

DOEG

My lord, shall we order an altar built up?

SAUL

Is it not enough that I have brought them cattle and sheep and also Agag, the King of the Amalekites? What will they beside?

PEOPLE

An altar, an altar!

AHINOAM

Saul, take courage, for you are king and conqueror. Build up an altar and sacrifice.

The people fling up their arms in approval.

JONATHAN

Wait but a little while.

MICHAL

Father, you are so great and the victory is so great, cannot they have patience?

JONATHAN

My father, you are forbidden to sacrifice.

SAUL

And who is he that should lay commandment upon me? Build ye then an altar!

DOEG

repeating the command to the soldiers

Build ye an altar.

Soldiers run hither and thither heaping stones. The two young men stand behind with banners. Youths heap flowers.

MICHAL *to her father*

Father, my father, I fear that this is a wrong and Jehovah will not forget.

SAUL *to* MICHAL

Take your hand from off my robe. Let the burnt offering be placed upon the altar.

DOEG

So be it, my lord.

Smoke arises from the altar as SAUL *stands beside it.*

VOICE

And is Saul also among the prophets?

CRIES

Huzza, huzza! The day of the Lord!

PEOPLE *chanting*

He hath laid them low, laid them low.
Agag he hath brought captive.
The pride of Amalek perishes.

Sudden silence. The faces of all turned to the L, *to a footpath from the hills. A solitary figure, white-bearded, clad in a long white mantle, appears.*

MICHAL

The Prophet Samuel!

SAUL

Blessed be thou of Jehovah!

SAMUEL

Saul, woe unto thee!

He knocks down the altar of stones with his staff and tramples on the flowers. Shudder of horror from the people. SAUL *utters an exclamation, totters, leans heavily on* DOEG. AHINOAM *runs to him on the other side, but he spurns her.* MICHAL *utters a faint cry and seizes* JONATHAN'S *hand.*

MICHAL

Alas, my brother!

SAMUEL

Saul, you have broken the commandment of Jehovah.

SAUL

Nay, I have performed His commandment.

SAMUEL

Was not His commandment, Bring not a spoil of the conquered peoples, but destroy them utterly and sacrifice not till the prophet come?

SAUL

I have obeyed. I have gone the way which Jehovah sent me. I have taken captive Agag and I have destroyed his people utterly.

SAMUEL

What means then this lowing of the cattle which I hear and the smoke which ascends?

SAUL

The people took of the spoil to sacrifice unto Jehovah by the well of Bethlehem.

SAMUEL

Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt offerings as in obedience?

SAUL

Because thou camest not within the hours appointed and because of the victory, I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering.

SAMUEL

Foolishly have ye done.

The people groan and prostrate themselves.

AGAG

Lick ye the dust before the gray-beard.

SAMUEL

You have sinned because you have forsaken Jehovah and lo, his punishment will descend upon you.

The people wail.

SAUL

Nay, nay, not on them, not on my people.

JONATHAN

Let it fall on me, the seed of Saul.

MICHAL

And on me, his daughter !

SAUL

No, not on them, not on my children beloved.

SAMUEL

Choose, then, on you and your house or on these people.

A long pause, while SAUL *thinks.*

SAUL

I have chosen.

The people wail.

PEOPLE

Woe unto us, woe, woe !

SAUL

It is I alone that have sinned. Let the curse fall on me alone.

SAMUEL

Let the people go. Let them depart, each man to his house.

The people scatter in various directions, R *and* L, *the two young men with banners lowered.* AGAG *remains in the centre with his hands bound.*

AGAG

Like foxes, each one to his hole.

DOEG *pricks him with his spear and so drives him out.*

ADRIEL *to* MERAB

Come, let us depart to our home.

MERAB *pouting*

The day has been spoiled.

Exeunt MERAB *and* ADRIEL.

SAUL *to* AHINOAM.

Woman, go with your daughter.

Exit AHINOAM, *beckoning to* BITHIAH, R.

MICHAL

kneeling by SAMUEL

Deal gently with him, I pray!

She kisses her father's hand and goes out with JONATHAN.

JONATHAN *as he departs*

Father, we will wait for you by the terebinth-tree.

SAMUEL

Saul, when you were little in your own sight, you were made king over Israel, and Jehovah would have established your kingdom upon Israel forever, but now it shall not continue.

SAUL

I pray you, pardon, pardon.

SAMUEL

Jehovah hath sought him a man after his own heart who shall rule in your place.

SAUL

The punishment is greater than I can bear. Nay, nay, it must not be so. My seed shall possess the kingdom after me. Leave me, man of iron. *He turns from* SAMUEL. Nay, leave me not.

He clings to SAMUEL'S *mantle, which is torn in his hands.*

SAMUEL

Even thus hath Jehovah rent the kingdom of Israel from you this day and given it to another.

The sky is darkened and there is lightning and thunder as SAMUEL *departs the way he came.* SAUL *falls down, face between his knees, moaning.*

SAUL *musing*

The kingdom is rent from me and is given unto my neighbor, one greater than I. Jehovah does not lie, neither will He repent.

Laughter is heard from E L. AMASA *and* ASAHEL, *young lads of fifteen, nephews of* DAVID, *run, laughing breathlessly, over stones and bowlders. They carry between them a basket of fruits and cakes. They look behind them.*

AMASA

Look there!

ASAHEL

There he comes.

AMASA

Down, stoop down!

ASAHEL

Quick, he will see us.

They crouch behind the ruined altar of stones. Some of the stones roll under their feet. They laugh.

AMASA

Hush!

DAVID'S VOICE

from the L, *singing*

The mountains were glad,
Yea, the little hills rejoiced
At His coming.

ASAHEL *lifts his head and* AMASA *pulls him down.*

SAUL *still unheeding*

I am brought down to the grave.

Enter DAVID, 1 E R, *carrying his harp twined with red anemones. He is a slight but stalwart lad of twenty, with a poet's brow and a bearing of distinction.*

DAVID

Awake up, my glory;
Awake, psaltery and harp!
I myself will awake early.

Hearing a noise behind the altar he stops.

But a few minutes ago and the lads were with me and now I see them nowhere. I saw them flying through the rocks ahead and then they vanished.

AMASA *and* ASAHEL *spring up, holding over* DAVID'S *head a wreath of wild olives they have taken from the basket.*

DAVID

A crown!

SAUL, *attracted by this word, looks suddenly round. The boys drop the wreath in confusion.*

SAUL

What there?

All three are covered with confusion. DAVID *picks up the wreath and toys with it. The two boys falter backward toward* 2 E R, *while* SAUL'S *eyes are fixed on* DAVID.

SAUL

Cannot you speak?

DAVID

My lord?

SAUL

What do you here and with that crown?

DAVID

The play of children.

SAUL

taking it from DAVID'S *hand*

The play of children is not with crowns.

He cuts it in two with his sword and hurls it down. The two boys stand amazed at his violence.

To DAVID.

Your name?

DAVID

David of Bethlehem, son of Jesse.
Exeunt the boys.

SAUL

And these?

DAVID

They will answer for themselves.

SAUL

They have answered as do the wild antelopes when man calls them. They flee. Am I then so terrible?

DAVID

You terrify me not.

SAUL

You do not fear?

grasping him by the arm.

DAVID

My lord, I know not what is fear. I have watched the lone night on the mountain and bearded the lion when he roared after his prey. Why then should I fear mortal man to whom I have done no harm?

SAUL

Innocent! You know not fear, nor remorse that gnaws at the heart, nor shame that burns the soul. Do you know me?

DAVID

I think that you are one of the great, but your name is unknown to me. I am but a shepherd lad, feeding my father's flock among the hills of Bethlehem.

SAUL

And this harp?

DAVID

I love to awake music among the hills. I watch the stars over Bethlehem and the moon when she arises behind the cedars. I sing them on my harp. It makes also the melody of falling waters and of the rain-storms among the hills.

SAUL

Happy one! Your errand here?

DAVID

My brothers are great ones and are returning from afar. Have you not heard the fame of Eliab the potter and of Abinadab, the king's standard-bearer?

SAUL

The king?

DAVID

Yes, my lord. And I was sent with my nephews
to meet them and bring them refreshment.

SAUL

What do your brothers say of the king?

DAVID

That he is noble and brave.

SAUL

A godly man?

DAVID

Like one of the prophets.

SAUL

Are they pleased with his kingship?

DAVID

Yes, my lord.

SAUL

They would protect him to the death?

DAVID

To the death and I, too, my lord.

SAUL

Are you fain to serve the king?

DAVID

I would serve him with my life.

SAUL

So you long for the tumult of life?

DAVID

If I might serve Saul my king.

SAUL

Swear to me your loyalty to your king.

DAVID

clasping SAUL's *hand*

I swear.

SAUL

What have you here in this basket?

DAVID

Fruit, my lord, and cakes for my three brothers.

SAUL

Spread out that we may eat.

DAVID *unpacks the contents of the basket.*

DAVID

Have you been at Gibeah and seen the king?

SAUL

Yes, I have seen him. What, raisins?

DAVID

A lordly man to look upon?

SAUL

And cakes of barley, also? He is dark, yes, and tall.

DAVID

Royal in manner?

SAUL

Abrupt, they say, and of an evil temper. Milk in a bottle!

DAVID

It is his kingly wrath at follies and the things that are wrong.

SAUL

Fall to eating, boy.

DAVID

I cannot eat. My heart is bursting.

SAUL

At what?

DAVID

At the thought that you have seen the king. Have you sat at meat with him?

SAUL

Even as I do now with you. Eat, eat!

DAVID

rising and going to the well

No, no, I am not hungry. Will you not have water from the well of Bethlehem?

He draws water and offers a cup to SAUL, *who drinks.*

SAUL

Did you hear Saul's army as it went through the hills to Gibeah?

DAVID

Nought but huzzas and the trampling of feet like the noise of many waters, but I was afar among the caves, looking for my sheep.

SAUL

Did you hear no other sound?

DAVID

Jehovah thundered among His mountains and the lightning was upon the waters like a sword.

SAUL *gloomily*

When the curse fell upon me!

DAVID

My lord?

SAUL

Sing me one of your songs. I am troubled.

DAVID *takes his harp while* SAUL *rests himself against the oak-tree, shading his eyes with a fold of his robe.*

DAVID *singing*

The Lord my shepherd is,
I shall not want.
In the green pastures shall I lie
And walk beside still waters.

The Lord my soul restores;
He leadeth me
In paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Enter from 2 E R, *unnoticed,* JONATHAN *and* MICHAL.

Yea, though I walk in night,
In death's dark valley,
Yet will I fear no evil,
For Thou art with me.

MICHAL, *as if fascinated, has been approaching* DAVID. *At the conclusion of this last strophe he sees her and rises, surprised. She puts her*

finger on her lip to signify silence and he sings again.

Yet I will fear no evil,
For Thou art with me.

As DAVID *sings,* MICHAL *continues to approach, her finger still upheld in warning.*

My cup runs over.
Goodness and mercy follow me—

DAVID *stops singing but plays.* MICHAL *takes up the music, unconsciously.*

MICHAL *singing*

And in the king's house thou shalt dwell
All thy life's days.

At the new voice SAUL *turns and sees them side by side. His robe which he has been holding before his eyes drops from his uplifted hand.* DAVID *and* MICHAL *smile, looking first at* SAUL, *then at each other.*

SAUL

Is this a dream?

Enter quietly from 2 E R, DOEG.

to DOEG

Is this a dream?

DOEG

My lord?

SAUL

Do you see yon two?

DOEG

A shepherd lad and——

SAUL

Peace! *(to* DAVID*)* Sing again!

DOEG

My lord king, the shepherd lad hath bewitched you.

DAVID

prostrating himself

The king! My lord Saul!

SAUL

Why have you come, all of you, to trouble my joy?

DOEG

Your people wait for you, sire, at Gibeah.

DAVID *to* JONATHAN

The king! I knew not. And you are the prince Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Yes, he is the king, my father, and you have brought him peace.

DAVID *to* MICHAL

And you are Saul's daughter! The king's daughter!

MICHAL

Only Michal.

DAVID *enraptured*

Michal, Michal.

DOEG

My lord, the army waits before the gates of Gibeah.

SAUL

Come, come, I have delayed too long.

MICHAL

lingering to DAVID

Shall I not also know your name?

DAVID

I am David of Bethlehem.

MICHAL

You shall be known as David, the sweet singer.

SAUL

My lad, remember that Saul the king is your friend.

JONATHAN

And Jonathan also, until my life's end.

They clasp hands. Exeunt 2 E R, JONATHAN *and* MICHAL.

DOEG

as he goes out with SAUL

All this for a herd-boy, a smooth-faced tender of sheep!

DAVID

How beautiful is the king's daughter! She is like morning upon the hills.

He rearranges the fragments in his basket.

Supper with a king and song with a king's daughter, with Michal! *Taking his harp.* Happy harp! She has sung to the sound of your strings. I wish also that she had eaten from this loaf.

He holds the loaf in both hands longingly. Enter MICHAL *from* R. DAVID *drops the loaf with a start.*

MICHAL *shyly*

I have lost my—ring. I twirled it thus between my fingers and it—fell.

JONATHAN

appearing at 2 E R

Do you find it, Michal ?

MICHAL

Not yet.

JONATHAN

I will help you.

MICHAL

No, no.

DAVID

I will help her.

MICHAL *pointing* L

Jonathan, please look for it there, beneath the terebinth-tree.

JONATHAN *going out* L

Over here ?

MICHAL

Further off, still further. Yes.

DAVID *looks for the ring while* MICHAL *looks for it also, glancing shyly up at him from time to time.*

DAVID

I am sorry. I do not find it.

MICHAL

Why, here it is, slipped within this plaiting of my robe.

DAVID

Where?

He goes to her and they stand very close, looking at the ring.

MICHAL

Now I suppose I must go.

DAVID

Would you not like a—drink of water?

MICHAL

Yes, I think so. Indeed, I am very thirsty.

DAVID *drawing water*

I will draw you some.

MICHAL *watching*

How well you do that, how wonderful!

DAVID

It is not difficult.

MICHAL

Let me.

DAVID *hands her the rope to let down into the well.*

MICHAL

as she lets the vessel drop too suddenly

Alack, what have I done?

Both laugh.

DAVID

Here is enough.

He pours water into a bowl and hands it to her.

MICHAL

after she has drunk

And you?

DAVID *takes it, turns it to the same place where she had sipped, then, smiling at her, drinks. He holds the cup in his hand till after* MICHAL'S *departure.*

JONATHAN'S VOICE

Michal, Michal!

MICHAL

I must go.

DAVID

And I shall see you no more!

MICHAL

Shall see me no more!

JONATHAN'S VOICE *nearer*

Michal!

MICHAL

I come, I come.

JONATHAN *appears at* L

Farewell, David.

JONATHAN

Farewell, David, and we shall surely meet again.

DAVID

God be with you!

Exeunt 2 E R, JONATHAN *and* MICHAL. DAVID *looks at the cup, which he still holds in his hands.*

Cup of my joy which the lips of the princess have touched.

He dashes the cup to the ground.

Her lips shall be the last that have touched your brim.

Singing.

The king shall joy in my strength,
How greatly shall he rejoice!
Thou hast given me my heart's desire,
The request of my lips thou hast not withholden.

Enter E L, ELIAB, ABINADAB, SHAMMAH—DAVID'S *three brothers.* ELIAB, *a great hulk of humanity, huge-voiced and shaggy-maned.* ABINADAB, *a loose-limbed, stalking scout, with long-fingered active hands. Shammah, a square-built son of the soil, with a wide mouth open to easy mirth. He is incongruously decked in gauds.*

DAVID *singing*

On my head thou settest a crown of pure gold,
And makest me blest forever.

ELIAB *vociferously*

Dreamer, awake!

ABINADAB

Prater of gold crowns.

DAVID *springing up*

My brothers!

ELIAB

Well may you cry! Is it thus that you watch for your brothers?

ABINADAB

as DAVID *greets him affectionately*

I had rather your cakes than your embraces.

SHAMMAH

Spread your mantle on the herbage, David, so that I soil not my fine trappings.

ELIAB

Are we not brave brothers for you? The Amalekites fled before us like chaff before the wind.

He seizes DAVID *with rough jocularity to overthrow him in illustration of his meaning, but* DAVID *withstands him.*

Even so they toppled!

ABINADAB

Even so they withstood you!

ELIAB

drinking a bottle of milk

Even so they vanished!

ABINADAB

Your fingers are fitter for the potter's wheel than for the use of weapons, Eliab.

SHAMMAH

You have not provided for a babe, David. Is this meat for the appetite of a soldier?

DAVID

My lord the king hath supped with me. Therefore I have not more for you.

SHAMMAH

Star-gazer! You have been no nearer the king than you are to wearing this robe of mine. Care! Soil it not with your foot, herd-boy!

ABINADAB

I shrewdly surmise that you yourself are the king with your dream-crown of pure gold upon your head that have emptied this basket before our coming.

ELIAB

as they all rise to go

Stay here then, little brother, and sing by the water-courses. We go to follow the real king. Some time I will send for you and perhaps you may be my armor-bearer.

SHAMMAH

In time you may be like unto us. Come, brothers.

As they start on their way 1 E R *they are met by* JESSE, *his wife and a servant, coming from Bethlehem.*

JESSE

as they greet each other

My sons, a solemn message has brought me hither. The prophet Samuel has sent for you to meet you in these hills apart.

SHAMMAH *to* DAVID

What are you waiting for, olive-branch? Run to your caves and thistles.

DAVID'S MOTHER

Farewell, beloved.

DAVID

Farewell, mother. Farewell all. I am off to my sheep-tower.

Exit DAVID E L

JESSE

The elders come.

Enter one by one three patriarchs, pacing in studied solemnity. Greetings are exchanged.

FIRST ELDER

I much misdoubt me some calamity overhangs.

SECOND ELDER

The Philistines, perhaps, have stolen the Urim and Thummim.

THIRD ELDER

It is well that we are called. Samuel hath respect to our wisdom.

JESSE

Who can say? But lo, he comes!

Enter SAMUEL E L *and a servant, bearing a cruse of oil. All rise and bow low.*

JESSE

Welcome, thou man of God.

SAMUEL

Jehovah be with you.

ALL

And with you.

SAMUEL

Are your sons all here?

JESSE

They are all here.

DAVID'S MOTHER

There remains yet the youngest and he keeps the sheep.

SAMUEL

Send and fetch him, for we will wait till he come hither.

Servant is despatched, E L

FIRST ELDER

What would he with his cruse of oil?

SECOND ELDER

Shall a new prophet be set over us?

THIRD ELDER

Or a new king?

SAMUEL

Let your sons pass before me.

ELIAB

Lo, I am the eldest.

ABINADAB

I am before you as Saul's standard-bearer.

SAMUEL

In time of peace I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah and to anoint His elect unto His chosen office.

JESSE

A prophet, a priest? Not a new king over Israel?

SAMUEL

Jehovah will disclose His will when the time is ripe. Let them stand before me.

The three sons stand before SAMUEL *in turn, each with characteristic expression and attitude. Before each, after earnestly looking,* SAMUEL *bows his*

head in disappointment. The elders earnestly copy each gesture of the prophet SAMUEL.

SAMUEL

Has your youngest son not yet come?

ELIAB

The stripling, the smooth-faced!

ABINADAB

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings!

SHAMMAH

With the sheep-skin on his shoulder and the flute to his mouth!

DAVID *enters* E L, *running, his harp, twined with anemones, in his hand.*

DAVID'S MOTHER

Beloved!

DAVID *saluting*

I have come fleet-foot from the sheep-folds. My mother! My father!

SAMUEL

SAMUEL, *speaking apart with* DAVID'S *mother.*

David is set apart for the kingship, but Jehovah reveals it not to him nor to Israel till the time be come. David, my son, hither!

DAVID *approaches* SAMUEL *and bows before him as the prophet anoints his head with oil.*
He is now the anointed of Jehovah.

DAVID

My cup runs over! Leave us together alone, I pray you.

Exeunt by R *all but* SAMUEL, DAVID, *and his mother.*

SAMUEL *to David's mother*

You are his mother. Stay by us. *To* DAVID. The voice of Jehovah speaketh through me unto you. Hearken. You shall deliver the land, you, David, from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all the heathen. The vision of the Lord be upon you.

The spirit of God descends upon DAVID. *After a period of silence he speaks, but as if to himself alone.*

DAVID

Lo, I see a house made desolate.
A voice of weeping and a voice of lamentation,
A strong man bowed down.

SAMUEL *to himself*

The Vision of the House of Saul!

DAVID *wrapt in his vision*

A lion is come up from his thicket.
He is gone forth from his place to make the land desolate.

SAMUEL

A Vision of the Strife between Saul and David.

DAVID

I go down to the potter's house and, behold, he worketh a work on the wheels;
The vessel he maketh of clay is marred in the hands of the potter.
He breaketh it on the floor that it falleth into bits.

SAMUEL

A Vision of the Sin of Saul.

DAVID

He maketh again another vessel as seemeth good to the potter;
Oh, people of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?
Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand.
Even a full wind comes now unto me,
I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul,

The sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.
The priests shall be astonished and the prophets shall wonder.
Behold, he cometh up as clouds and his chariots are as a whirlwind.
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Salvation cometh from the hills and from the multitude of mountains.

SAMUEL

A Vision of the Victory of David.

DAVID

with a relapse to infinite sadness

Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to His commandments!
Then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.
Thou art carried into a far country:
Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter.
Take the mill-stones and grind meal.
Sit thee silent and get thee into darkness,
For thou shalt no more be called the Lady of Kingdoms!

DAVID *slowly awakens from his trance.*

SAMUEL

A Vision of the Long Captivity. As in a glass he sees the future darkly.

DAVID'S MOTHER

Beloved, what have you seen?
Did you see the vision of yourself? Did you see the victor's face?

DAVID

Myself I saw not, nor any man whose face I know. But kings and princes saw I and they bowed before a shepherd-lad.

AMASA *and* ASAHEL *enter hurriedly from* 2 E R. *They salute.*

ASAHEL

Huzza, huzza! A messenger from the king.

Enter 1 E R *the three brothers.*

AMASA

Good news! A messenger from the king!

SHAMMAH

The king will appoint me his body-guard.

ELIAB

I to be Captain over a hundred.

Enter 2 E R, DOEG, *bowing ironically to all.*

DOEG

Is there here a son of Jesse? *The three brothers push forward.* By the name of David?

DAVID

It is I.

DOEG

Who keeps the sheep?

DAVID

It is I.

DOEG

The king summons you to his palace at Gibeah.

DAVID'S MOTHER

Beloved, already your future dawns brightly.

DAVID

I know not. If it be greatness to serve my king, to win the friendship of the king's son, of the king's daughter, then am I called to greatness. I ask no more.

He waves his hand in exultant farewell.

To the king—the king.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I: THE SUMMER GARDEN AT GIBEAH: *A Syrian garden, springtime, with blush of almond-trees on hill-slopes and one burst of bloom above a rustic seat,* C. *A path leads away through roses and lilies,* 1 E R. 2 E R *conducts to the camp of Philistia. On the* L *is shown the façade of* SAUL'S *palace, low, delicate in color, with elaborately sculptured windows and doors.* 1 E L *leads to Gibeah, behind the palace. A door,* 2 E L, *enters the palace.*

On the seat are gay patterns in embroidery, thrown down in the merry mêlée of SAUL'S *idle courtiers. Seated on the sward are a group of merrymakers,* MERAB, ADRIEL, *and others, men and maidens, six or eight. Two black serving-maids with fans, follow their mistresses, fanning them.* ELEAZER, *an old gardener, gnarled of figure, kindly and winter-apple of face, putters in the garden, up-stage.*

The curtain rises on a whirl of chatter.

MERAB

Listen, have ye all heard the news?

ALL

What, what?

MERAB

We have a new darling amongst us.

ALL

Who?

MERAB

King Saul has caught on the hills a shepherd lad,
a wild herdsboy.

ADRIEL

Who knows nothing but to feed sheep.

MERAB

And to sing! Oh, ye should hear him warble.
She laughs.

ADRIEL

Have you heard him?

MERAB *laughing*

At his window in the early morning. "A psalm
to my black ewe!" "Ditty to the crook-
horned ram!"
All laugh.

ADRIEL

It was the fancy of Saul to send for him and lo! Saul has not yet given him audience. Such is the black humor of the king.

MERAB *clapping her hands*

I have it, I have it!

ALL

Who, what?

ELEAZER

drawing near, with a crooked, stooping gait

Have you caught a hornet, Princess Merab? They do have slender waists, the hornets, but a sting at t'other end, terrific. There be drawbacks to everything.

All laugh.

MERAB

Not a hornet, but an idea has stung me.

ELEAZER *moving away*

They do be troublesome as hornets some years and a deal harder to kill.

MERAB

Let us hold mock court here and summon this David, this shepherd man.

A MAIDEN

Is that his name, David, David?

A MAN

'Tis a curious name, an odd conceit, to title a man so, David, David!

All repeat the name drolly.

ALL

David! David!

ADRIEL *rising*

We shall have rare sport with this unlettered clown.

All rise and huddle around MERAB *and* ADRIEL.

MERAB

Bithiah shall be queen.

They seat the black maid on the rustic bench and crown her with leaves.

ADRIEL

Lo, she is black but comely.

MERAB

Who shall be our king?

VOICES

I, I!

ADRIEL

Let us fetch Hurai, the chief cook. He is of a lordly stomach.

A young man goes off, running, 1 E L.

ADRIEL

There shall be footmen at the steps of the throne. Hither, Eleazer, to us!

ALL

Eleazer! Good, good!

ELEAZER *throws aside a weed he has just uprooted.*

ELEAZER

I cannot come to ye. I am busy with these other weeds.

MERAB

to a young man, cajolingly

Serve us as a footman for the nonce!

ADRIEL *to a maiden*

You, also, shall attend the throne.

The maiden and young man, amid laughter, are seated on cushions below the bench.

MERAB

Now let one go for David and we shall watch his manner of behavior.

Young man goes off running, 2 E L. *First young man returns* 1 E L, *with* HURAI, *a fat and pompous person who resents their fun at his expense.*

ADRIEL

Let us have his apron off.

MERAB

No, no. What does David know of the attire of palace servants? It will be to him as a robe of state. We will put your mantle on Hurai above the cook's apron.

ADRIEL'S *gorgeous robe is put on* HURAI *and he is seated on the bench beside* BITHIAH, *to the dazement and discomfort of them both. General chatter.*

ADRIEL

Silence. David comes. I will be spokesman.

Enter, 2 E L, DAVID *and the young man.*

David, the time being ripe, the king sends for you.

He points to HURAI *and* BITHIAH.

Our gracious queen also will greet you. Do them obeisance.

As DAVID *calmly meets their eyes their tittering mirth changes to admiration at his bearing.*

MAIDEN

Indeed, he is no unlettered clown.

MERAB

Will you not kneel before our queen?

DAVID *kneels before* MERAB. *All laugh.*

DAVID

O Queen of Merrymakers, I salute you.

He kisses her hand.

But the king I see not.

ELEAZER *appears around the garden path.*

DAVID *perceives him, goes to him and bows.*

King of the garden, good son of our old father Adam, you are the finest gentleman of us all.

There is a laugh at ADRIEL'S *expense and applause for* DAVID. *Enter, from the palace,* 2 E L, MICHAL. *She pauses, surveying the group curiously.*

MERAB

Well spoken, David. You have found a king among us, but who is your queen, queen of your heart?

DAVID *looks about, sees* MICHAL. *She comes forward, her eyes upon him.*

ADRIEL

Among the hills, perhaps, you have a lass?

DAVID

slowly and significantly

Among the hills I had a lass. I was a prince there.

ALL *surprised*

A prince?

DAVID

Free as the wind, who roameth wherever he listeth. Free to wander, to sing, to love, prince of hill and dale. In the palace of King Saul, I am his harp-player. A harp-player may not look upon a king's daughter. I have no lass here.

MICHAL *sighs deeply and moves away among the trees,* C. ADRIEL *follows her.*

ADRIEL

Wherefore that deep sigh, little maiden?

MICHAL

A sigh? I do not know wherefore I sighed.

Of all the courtiers DAVID *alone observes the approach of* KING SAUL.

DAVID

The King, the King!

SAUL *and* JONATHAN *enter, wrapt in deep converse, and come suddenly upon the careless confusion of the garden-idlers.*

SAUL

Humiliation upon humiliation, disgrace upon disgrace! And now comes a challenge from Goliath, giant son of Anakim. And not one of our people stands forth to answer.

He frowns upon the merry group.

What here?

BITHIAH *and* HURAI, *apprehensive, tumble down from the improvised throne. Their action attracts the attention of the others, who then shrink away from* SAUL, *in habitual fear of his black look.*

SAUL

Out! Dawdlers! While Israel perishes, ye wanton the time. Begone!

All scatter R *and* L *but* DAVID, JONATHAN, MICHAL, *and* MERAB.

Who is yon lad?

DAVID

My lord, I am David, son of Jesse.

MERAB *languidly goes to the bench and picks up her embroidery.*

SAUL *blankly*

David, son of Jesse.

DAVID

My lord, I played the harp for you by the well of Bethlehem.

SAUL

The harp-player! I remember. The shepherd lad with his brave and simple heart. I remember.

His face lightens.

You are loyal yet, in this mob of seekers? Come with me, lad, to my chamber.

DAVID *follows* SAUL. MICHAL *stands musingly, toying with a white rose which she has taken from her hair. She is between* DAVID *and the door of the palace. As* DAVID *approaches, she moves slightly, but as if accidentally, to stand between him and the door. He bows and would pass, awaiting. She drops the rose, looking at him and then down to her fallen rose. He glances at the rose and then at her. Meanwhile,* SAUL *and* JONATHAN *have disappeared,* 2 E L.

DAVID *gravely*

Princess, your father awaits me.

MICHAL

David, I have dropped a rose.

DAVID *picks up the flower and hands it to her. She does not take it, but looks at it, while he steadily offers it. She receives it, speaking.*

Have you forgotten? Though my father forgets, his daughter remembers!

DAVID

What do you remember?

MICHAL

I remember your kindness to—my father. And you?

DAVID

I have forgotten nothing. But also I remember that you—are a king's daughter and I—a harp-player at the king's footstool.

Exit DAVID, 2 E. L. MICHAL *stands doubtfully, the rose in her hand, then, with a passionate gesture of disappointment, throws it to the ground.*

MERAB

Are you angry with the rose?

MICHAL

It does not please me.

MERAB

Come sit by me and let us finish our patterns.

MICHAL *goes to her, they sit side by side on the bench.* MICHAL *takes from* MERAB *mechanically the various articles of their handicraft.*

MICHAL *intensely*

Merab, how should the love of a man be won?

MERAB *surprised*

How should I know, child?

MICHAL

You are wedded to Adriel and you should know.

MERAB

It was he won my love, not I his. But still, methinks I can discourse to you of the winning of man's love. Let him stand on the Threshold of Trembling. Give him first to drink the Cup of Surrender and then the Cup of Fear. He must never be sated. So may man's love be kept.

MICHAL

That is the keeping of man's love. But the getting?

MERAB

Ah, ask me not in riddles. This I know. When the huntsman has bagged one bird, then must he go hunting again.

MICHAL

Go hunting again!

MERAB

Listen, sister. A woman's nature is to be shy and wild. The wild bird does not flutter her wings in the hunter's very face.

MICHAL

Merab, have I done that? Have I fluttered my wings in his very face?

MERAB

with peals of amusement

Your wings? In his very face? Whose face?

MICHAL *in rosy shame*

Hush! Oh, hush!

MERAB

suddenly calming herself to read MICHAL'S *face*

I know, I know. It is David, the shepherd, the harp-player from the hills. Oh, you little

foolish one. You that have sworn to love only a man of war, a son of many battles.

MERAB *rises, laughing, and goes toward* L.

MICHAL

I swear that he could swing a sword with any of your swaggering courtiers.

MERAB *laughing*

Not he, with those musical fingers. Tweedle-dee-dee.

Exit MERAB, 2 E L.

MICHAL *bows her head on the back of the bench and is seen to be weeping. Enter by garden-path,* 1 E R, ELEAZER.

MICHAL

I love him and—he must not know it, for—if he knows it, he will go hunting again. But I have told him already by the look of my eyes. It was too soon, too soon.

ELEAZER *comfortingly*

ELEAZER

Have you seen my almond-trees, Lady Michal? They are burst out into bloom this morning, most glorious.

MICHAL *to herself*

It was too soon, too soon.

ELEAZER

Yes, lady. When the almond-trees blossom too soon, there 'ull be a flood of rain, come fruit-time. There's no good thing but there's a drawback. There's a drawback to everything.

Enter, 2 E L, DAVID. ELEAZER *beckons to him with a kindly twinkle.*

She is heavy-hearted these days, master, terrible heavy-hearted, sir.

ELEAZER *hobbles up stage, his back to them.* DAVID *looks at* MICHAL, *whose face is turned from him. He sees also the rose on the ground, picks it up stealthily, kisses it and puts it in his bosom.* MICHAL *suddenly raises her head and sees the stealthy motion of his hand.*

MICHAL *sharply*

What are you doing?

DAVID

I am putting away a memory.

MICHAL *bitterly*

A token from some hill-girl.

DAVID

Mayhap this is true.

AHINOAM *opens the door of the palace and calls.*

AHINOAM

Daughter!

MICHAL

Yes, mother, I am working the pattern.

She hastily takes up her embroidery.

AHINOAM

Do not stay too long in the garden.

MICHAL

I am waiting to—speak to—someone.

Exit AHINOAM, 2 E L.

DAVID

Did you wish to—speak with someone else, Lady Michal?

MICHAL *hesitating*

Yes, I wished, I wish——

ELEAZER *comes in sight down the path.*

I wish to speak with Eleazer.

ELEAZER

rubbing his chin humorously

Don't waste sweet words on the likes of me, Lady Michal.

MICHAL

would-be haughtily

I wished to ask you, Eleazer—to say, it looks like clear weather to-morrow.

ELEAZER

with great enthusiasm

It do so, Lady Michal, and that puts me in mind of my herbs for Hurai. *Walking away,* R. There is never a drawback to leaving two lovers alone.

Exit ELEAZER, 1 E R.

DAVID

May I sit beside you for a moment, Michal?

MICHAL *moves to make room for him on the bench.*

MICHAL

As you please.

DAVID, *to her disappointment, seats himself on the grass.*

DAVID

It is as *you* please, Michal. I fear I do not please you.

MICHAL

Do you wish to please me?

DAVID

Lady Michal——

MICHAL

Do not call me so. I am a girl, younger than you.

DAVID

You seem a child, but I must remember that you are a king's daughter.

MICHAL

I would that you might forget.

DAVID *deeply*

Ah, Michal, I would that I might forget!

A pause of embarrassment between them.

Let us speak of other things, Michal. How do the days fare with you?

MICHAL

I must study and I must read. This morning the rabbi read with me.

DAVID

What was the lesson?

An undercurrent of tenderness runs through their talk.

MICHAL

It was of—*suddenly diffident*—I have forgotten the theme.

DAVID

made eager by her shyness.

You have not forgotten so soon? Of our first father?

MICHAL

No.

DAVID

Of Pharaoh and the Red Sea?

MICHAL

Ah, more interesting than that. I mean—it was of a man and a—woman.

DAVID

Who loved each other?

MICHAL

Of Rachel and how her lover served for her.

DAVID

He served for her seven years and it seemed but a day because of the love he bare her. That is how a man may love.

MICHAL *musingly*

Seven years she waited for him. That was a woman's love.

DAVID

Michal, would you wait for a lover so many years?

MICHAL

Ah, I should not wish to—wait so long.

DAVID

Woman's love is like the wind.

MICHAL

Nay, think of the love between Ruth and Naomi.

DAVID *quoting*

For whither thou goest I will go and whither thou lodgest I will lodge——

MICHAL

Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

DAVID

They were two women, Michal, who loved one another so.

MICHAL

Nay, but the love of woman to man is deeper yet.

DAVID *leaning to her*

Say you so, Michal?

MICHAL

My heart says so.

DAVID *impassioned*

I would serve seven years, ay, twice seven years, to win the woman I love. And you, Michal, would you give me hope?

MICHAL

No, no.

DAVID

No hope?

He rises and MICHAL *also.*

MICHAL

I should not ask you to serve for—me seven years, David.

DAVID *turning away*

I have soared too high.

MICHAL

I had rather be happy—*now!*

DAVID *looks back at her, reads her face.*

DAVID

You——?

MICHAL

Yes, David.

DAVID

Michal!

He is about to take her to his arms, when a noise and stir of people comes from the R.

MICHAL

Listen, David.

SAUL *and* AHINOAM *enter*, 2 E L.

SAUL

What tumult is this?

DAVID *going to* L *to look*

My lord, the people swarm to our gates.

Enter, R *and* L, *a hurly-burly of people, preceded from the* R *by* SAPH, *a tall Philistine of insolent demeanor, with a body-guard of two. There are townspeople and laboring folk from their daily occupation.* ELIAB *with his roughly moulded vessel on his head, a weaver with his balls of wool, a miller, his clothes dusty with meal. From the palace come* MERAB, PHALTIEL, *an apish-looking man of ignoble bearing*, DOEG, *crafty and sullen*, JONATHAN *and others.*

SAUL *to* SAPH

What is your message?

SAPH

in loud and insolent tones

A message from Philistia, defiance from Philistia and from Goliath, her champion. Who of ye will meet him in battle? Ye children of the

jackals, striped barley-eaters, slaves of the hill-god Yahweh!

As SAPH *speaks the people edge away from him abjectly, but* DAVID *pushes forward in indignation.*

SAUL

Who speaks to offer himself as champion for his people?

SAPH

By the wooden feet of Dagon, ye are silent. Almighty is Dagon, god of Philistia, and great is Goliath, their champion.

Exit, 2 E R, SAPH.

SAUL

Ye that clamor so in times of peace, in peril your tongues are still.

DOEG

after conferring with PHALTIEL

If it please my lord, the king, to offer largess——

SAUL

To the victor any reward, even the hand of the king's daughter.

MICHAL'S *and* DAVID'S *looks, as by a common thought, are drawn together.* DOEG *pushes* PHALTIEL *forward. He elbows back with a bleating laugh.*

DAVID

My lord, your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

After the first stupefied silence, a ripple of contemptuous laughter runs round the place.

More ringingly defiant.

My lord, your servant will go and fight this Philistine.

The laughter is hushed at the look in DAVID'S *face as he surveys the people.*

SAUL

Here, indeed, among all the craven host of Israel, is a heart undaunted. David, you shall indeed go, but how shall you prevail, a young man, unused to the weight of armor?

DAVID

My lord, I have contended with the lion in his wilderness and my hand did not fail. Neither shall I fail in this endeavor.

Looking upward as if in prayer.

My times are in Thy hand!

SAUL

Ask what reward you will, David, my son, and ye, my people, be surety unto him that the reward is not denied.

PEOPLE

David, David!

DAVID

The hand of Michal, the king's daughter!

A murmur of surprise. DOEG *pushes* PHALTIEL *forward.*

PHALTIEL

O king, remember me.

DAVID

Who speaks?

PHALTIEL

with a bleating laugh

Phaltiel, prince of Laish.

DAVID

Will you then go out against Goliath, O Phaltiel, prince of Laish.

With a bleat, PHALTIEL *sinks back into the crowd.*

SAUL

This reward you shall have, David, the hand of Michal, my daughter.

DAVID *kneels to kiss* SAUL'S *hand, rises again.*

To the people.

All ye depart hence, and we shall presently send forth our champion.

Exeunt, R *and* L, *all but* DAVID, JONATHAN, *and* MICHAL.

David, in our arms you shall be clad and go forth like the sun for splendor.

DAVID *stretching himself*

In truth, my lord, I am unused to armor. It would become me ill.

He stoops to select a stone from the path.

I beg of you this stone from the garden of the princess. So, with my sling, I shall be a man of war in your service.

He turns to JONATHAN *and they start to go,* 2 E R.

SAUL

You would go thus unarmed?

DAVID

My feet burn for the road.
Farewell, farewell, Michal.

Exeunt, 2 E R, DAVID *and* JONATHAN.

SAUL

A fiery youth. Jehovah speed him. Come, daughter.

Exit SAUL, 2 E L. MICHAL *stands alone in the* C *of the garden.*

MICHAL

He has gone and Jonathan with him. He has gone and I am alone.

DAVID *runs in alone, from* R. *He speaks breathlessly, passionately.*

DAVID

I could not leave you thus, beloved, heart's desire.

DOEG *appears,* 1 E L, *black and sinister, peeping around the bole of a tree. As* DAVID *and* MICHAL *embrace,* DOEG *speaks.* DAVID *takes the rose from his bosom, kisses it.*

DAVID

It is your rose I wear in my bosom. It is for you I fight, for you, you, you!

DOEG *aside*

She will be giving her roses to a new lover soon, when David is food for the dogs. Grr-grr-grr!

DAVID

Fare you well, God be with you.

MICHAL

Ah, wait, wait! My heart bursts within me. How will you go without sword or shield, how

will you slay Goliath, the giant of the Philistines?

DAVID *handles his sling for action, aiming at* DOEG *by the bole of the tree. He shoots from his sling and almost instantaneously comes a cry of pain from* DOEG. *With his hand to his ear,* DOEG *disappears,* 1 E L. MICHAL *has turned to look.*

DAVID

still in the vigorous attitude of a slinger

Even as my stone stung the ear of yon eavesdropper, so will the pebble pierce the heart of Goliath.

CURTAIN.

The curtain rises and discovers MICHAL *alone in the garden. The light is dim as at twilight and grows gradually dimmer.* MICHAL *prays:*

MICHAL

O Thou, grant me to know the end! Send me a vision, a dream!

DARK CHANGE

As it gradually lightens, the field of Ephes-Dammim is disclosed where the combat is to take place. The

gorge of the brook runs through the C. *On either side are the opposing armies, the Israelites in glitter of armor, their arms upflung as in joyous acclaim. The Philistines with heads drooped and faces turned for retreat. The central figure in their midst is* DAVID, *on a knoll above the fallen body of* GOLIATH. *The drawn sword is in his hand, but his face is uplifted to heaven in thanksgiving.*

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE I

ACT II

SCENE II: THE WITCH OF ENDOR'S HUT ON THE ROAD TO GIBEAH. *A low and sordid room, scantily furnished. Night and a storm. A fire blazing,* L C. *A kettle on the hearth. Hooks in the wall to one side of the fire. Dried herbs hung from the ceiling. Human and animal skulls grinning on the walls. A low table,* C, *with a candle lighted. Behind it a bench with large feet in the similitude of spiders. A stool by the fireplace. Shuttered window,* C. *Down-stage,* R, *a small door opens to an inner chamber.*

Discovered, the WITCH OF ENDOR, *an old gaunt woman, wicked of eye and sharp-lipped, bending over the fireplace. She thrusts her chin forward when she speaks, has a thin, rasping voice that, when she is moved, rings deep and thrilling. The storm howls.*

WITCH

poking the fire with a stick

How the fire sputters! Burn, burn, burn!

A pause.

'Tis the black wind outside that brings the fire disease. It frets. Ooo-oh, oo-oh! Sputter, sputter, sputter! Ah, an ill night for man to be abroad, but he will come to-night. I shall hold him like a rat in a trap. Nibble, nibble! Is the bait toothsome, O Saul?

She goes to the window, opens the shutter and peers out.

How it howls, as if all the wolves of Lebanon were forth. Ooo-oh, oo-oh!

She listens sharply. A knock comes at the door.

The window or the door?

Knock is repeated.

Knock, then, to your heart's content. There are only two who enter this eve, the slain and the slayer. Ha-ha.

Knock and voice.

DAVID

I pray you, open the door.

WITCH

A pleasant voice, by my body.

DAVID

Good neighbor!

WITCH

What d'ye want?

DAVID

Shelter from the storm.

WITCH

Who are you, in the name of Beelzebub?

DAVID

A pilgrim and a stranger.

WITCH

What do you this hour of the night?

DAVID

I am eager on the road to—my dear.

WITCH

He runs after a girl. He will do nobody harm.
She unbolts the door and opens it.
In with you, then, in Beelzebub's name.
Enter DAVID *wet, stormbeaten, weary.*

DAVID

I thank you, good dame and neighbor.

WITCH

Men do not call me good dame, nor am I your neighbor.

DAVID

He is my neighbor who is my friend.

WITCH

You are over-zealous to name me friend when I kept you standing in the weather.

DAVID

throwing off his wet cloak

Lo, I am within. You give me roof and shelter. You are my friend and I yours.

WITCH

By the idols of Egypt, I like you full well. Draw up here to my fire.

She hangs up the cloak on the nails by the fire.

Tell me your story—an you tell me not true, you shall fare ill, for I read the souls of men.

DAVID *seats himself on the stool by the fire. The* WITCH *behind him watches, her fingers at the knife which is half concealed in her bosom.*

DAVID

It is hospitable to give ear to the traveller's tale, in so far as he pleases to speak, but further to force him, that is no hospitality.

WITCH

I like you better. Speak on.

DAVID

I come from the camp at Ephes-Dammim——

WITCH

Ha, you are deserter, a hater of Saul!

DAVID

Nay, I am not deserter, for I fought not with the army at Ephes-Dammim. Yet at Ephes-Dammim I fought and am now flying thence, hurriedly at night, to Gibeah.

WITCH

You speak like a wise man, in riddles. Say, what of the giant Goliath and of the Boaster, one David, who swore to slay him?

DAVID

It is because of that David I am here to-night.

WITCH

You are of us, I see, a hater of the mad king and his upstart herdling. You shall have a hand in the enterprise this night.

DAVID

his hand upon his sword

I am ready for the enterprise.

The WITCH *moves about the room apprehensively,*

casting suspicious glances at DAVID. *She fancies a sound at the door and listens.*

Do you await another traveller?

WITCH

It is of him I would tell you. Ay, one of the mighty.

DAVID

Strange houses he visits and strange hours he takes!

The WITCH *springs at his throat with her knife but* DAVID, *watchful, stays her.*

WITCH

Not stranger than you, spy, spy!

DAVID *turns the knife in her hand till she screams with pain and drops it.*

DAVID

It is not the good and innocent who have dread of spies.

He holds her by the wrists while she cowers before him.

WITCH

Ah, my lord, my lord, have pity on me and help me. I feared you as I fear all men. For whatever befalls I am dead this night.

DAVID

Speak me the truth!

WITCH

I am sought this night by a great prince, one of the mighty, that I may predict for him the future, and he would find me alone. Also this night my son Doeg comes to me. If they two meet, the mighty one will slay my son and me also, for that I have betrayed him, for he would not have it known that he traffics with me. Yet if I deny Doeg my son, Doeg my son will return to slay me, for he is a man of wrath.

DAVID

What is my part?

WITCH

Keep you the door against my son. Defend it with your sword, that he enter not. Afterward, you shall have of the gold that I get, a goodly portion.

DAVID

What of that mighty prince when he beholds me? Will he not think you have betrayed him into my hands?

WITCH

You are a youth and Doeg a bearded man, known to all Benjamin. I will clothe you as my servant and you can feign sleep upon this bench. Do you understand?

DAVID *seizing her*

The prince that visits the—Witch of Endor—

She cowers

is Saul, King of Israel, seeking traffic with a familiar spirit. Doeg comes to slay him and you are his accomplice. I, feigning sleep upon that bench, will be murdered, and conveniently thrust aside. I understand.

WITCH *trembling*

Oh, lord, lord, who are you?

DAVID

I am that boaster, one David.

WITCH

You have spoken the truth, but not wholly the truth. Ah, loose me, loose! Behold that knife upon the floor. I cannot harm you. I am in your hands.

DAVID *looses her. Picks up the knife and puts it in his girdle.*

DAVID

The truth!

WITCH

It is indeed Saul who comes, and Doeg who would slay him. But I would save my lord the king, if I could, yet what am I worth, an old woman and feeble?

A double knock at the door.

WITCH

I come, my lord.

She hurries about the room, fetching for DAVID *from a chest an old cloak.*

Yes, lord, I open. *To* DAVID. See nothing with your eyes, hear nothing with your ears.

DAVID *stretches himself on the bench, feigning sleep. The* WITCH *opens the door, bowing deeply.*

My lord, enter the house of your humble servant.

Enter SAUL *and* MICHAL, SAUL *cloaked, his face shrouded.* MICHAL'S *face veiled.*

SAUL

Were you not ready?

He sees DAVID, *who seems in profound sleep, his face hidden in the folds of his mantle.*

Who is yonder?

WITCH

Only my servant, lord, a brutish lad and asleep.
Awake, he knows nothing. Asleep, a stone!
She kicks DAVID'S *foot. He does not move, breathes heavily.*
Witness, lord.
MICHAL *lays a hand on her father's arm.*

MICHAL

Father, grant me a word with this woman.
At the sound of MICHAL'S *voice,* DAVID *starts, half raises his head, then lets it fall again.* SAUL *and* MICHAL *both look at him.*

WITCH

He dreams of the plough and the ploughshare.
He has been in the field all day. What do you wish, lady?

MICHAL

I wish the interpretation of a dream. I dreamed of a field of battle and one lay slain and one stood above with a drawn sword.

WITCH

Saw you the face of the slayer or of the slain?

MICHAL

The face of the slayer was as the face of an angel, but the slain I could not see.

WITCH *in her deep voice*

One is thy lover who hath slain
Yet not with stroke of sword;
He is a servant, yet one day
He shall be king and lord.

MICHAL

I understand not the interpretation. The dream was a good dream?

WITCH

Ay, a good dream for them as find it good, but a bad dream for some others.

SAUL

Beldame, let us to our business.

WITCH

What do you wish, my lord?

SAUL

Show me him who shall rule after me.

WITCH *in her deep voice*

The past is plain before mine eyes,
Old deaths and dooms long overpast;
In present knowledge I am wise,
But ah! the future is sealed fast.

My lord, I will call from the grave one who is wiser than I.

SAUL

You will call one from the dead?

The WITCH *opens the door,* R. *Bluish flames stream out.*

WITCH

Come.

SAUL *reluctantly follows her.*

MICHAL

Ah, I fear, I fear!

The door closes behind them. MICHAL *sits on the stool by the fire, facing down stage, her back to* DAVID. *His head rests on the table, away from her. She looks curiously about the room, sees the cloak hung up to dry. Then turns her head to look at* DAVID. *At the self-same moment he has turned to look at her. Both instantly resume their former positions.* MICHAL *hums uneasily and*

moves her stool against the wall so as to have a rest for her head. After a few minutes and more cautiously, the stolen glance is repeated, to their mutual embarrassment.

MICHAL *angry*

I will not have it. Ill-mannered servant of an old sorceress! Peeper and pryer!

DAVID'S *head is again on the table as if in deep sleep.*

Go to sleep, then. It is the hour for sleep.

He breathes heavily.

Clown! Have you nothing to do but sleep and snore in a lady's presence?

DAVID'S *hand falls to his side.* MICHAL *observes it.*

That hand is not the hand of a clown. It minds me of David's hand, David's fingers on his harp.

Singing softly to herself, she falls asleep. After a few minutes DAVID *rises softly, goes to her, stands above her lovingly, is startled when she stirs, looks at the door where* SAUL *and the* WITCH *have disappeared. He takes his cloak and places it around her shoulders. As he is doing so there falls from the pocket his sling. The rattle of this on the*

floor awakens her. She sits up to find him kneeling at her feet.

DAVID *gently*

Michal, speak not, do not stir! It is I, David.

MICHAL

You, David, here, a servant to the Witch of Endor!

DAVID

This night only. I was on the road to Gibeah, to you. The storm and the driving rain overtook me. My beast was spent.

MICHAL

And Goliath, the combat?

DAVID *picks up the sling.*

DAVID

It was victory, with this! But hush! We are in an evil place. It is not the house for you.

MICHAL

It was my father's wish.

DAVID

Alas for your father that he has communion with soothsayers and diviners! He is entrapped.

MICHAL

What, what? No, no.

DAVID

His enemies lie in wait for him.

MICHAL

Let us warn him, let us fly!

DAVID

It is impossible. But fear not. I will serve you to the end.

At a sound from the door, R, DAVID *quickly rolls over on the floor, feigning sleep.* MICHAL *closes her eyes. The* WITCH *enters,* R, *sees them both asleep. Chuckles.*

WITCH

Both feigning or both real?

She shrugs her shoulders.

A witch's servant and a king's daughter! A pretty pair!

She goes to the window, peers out into the night, returns, C. *Shakes her fist at* DAVID'S *sleeping form.*

I could knife you now, but your time will come soon enough.

Exit WITCH, R. DAVID *springs up and feels of his sword. A loud knock at the door.*

DAVID *to* MICHAL

Veil yourself. Sit quiet.
Imitating the WITCH'S *voice.*
Who goes there?

DOEG

I, Doeg.

DAVID *still feigning*

Wait a little.

DOEG

Witch-woman, hast repented our compact?
Open to us.

DAVID

To us, you say!

DOEG

Open or I tear down your house.

DAVID *in his own voice*

Stand back in the king's name.
The door is battered down. DAVID *makes ready, holding his sword.* MICHAL *stands shrinking against the wall.* DOEG *and two men burst into the room.*

DOEG

surveying the situation

Three birds at a stone. The black hawk and the white pigeon——

He surveys DAVID *contemptuously.*

and the upstart jackdaw. Fall to, my men.

The first man that would pass DAVID *to get to* MICHAL *is felled at a blow. There follows a much severer struggle between* DAVID *and the two.* DAVID *has one by the throat when a cry from* MICHAL *warns him of* DOEG'S *attack in the rear. He turns in time to save himself.* DOEG *at last is struck down. He falls heavily. The* WITCH *opens the door and bluish flames stream out as before. She sees the three prostrate figures,* DAVID *triumphant in the* C, *breathing hard, his forehead damp with sweat. She goes to* DOEG, *who lies prostrate.*

WITCH *bitterly*

Bravely have ye fought. A stout fighter, son of mine!

DOEG *turns on his elbow, groans.* DAVID *goes to him, plants his heel on his breast, points his sword at him.*

DOEG

Mercy!

WITCH

He is an evil one, but my only one. Spare him, lord!

DAVID

It is not my business to slaughter cattle. Let him lie.

WITCH *grovelling*

Most gracious prince!

DAVID

Silence. Bring hither the king.

The WITCH *hesitates.*

MICHAL

My father, my father! No harm has befallen him?

WITCH

He waketh from deep trance. His feet fail him.

DAVID *opens the door,* R.

DAVID

O Saul, King of Israel, come forth.

MICHAL *comes forward tremblingly.*

MICHAL

I fear, I fear she has bewitched him.

WITCH

Nay, he is the anointed of Israel. I durst not touch a hair of his head or I should be accursed.

SAUL *comes to the door,* R, *his hands to his eyes, as if blinded by a dazzling light. The bluish flames seen within gradually die down No one speaks. They watch* SAUL. MICHAL *behind* DAVID *with hands outstretched.* DAVID *in* C *looking compassionately at* SAUL. *The* WITCH *crouches at* DAVID'S *feet.*

SAUL

in a strange voice as of one in a trance

And the prophet spake, declaring unto me: "He whom thine eyes first fall upon, he it is and his seed shall sit upon the throne after thee. He whom thine eyes first fall upon——"

SAUL *drops the mantle from before his eyes, passes his hand across, stands face to face with* DAVID. DAVID *drops to his knees.*

DAVID

My lord king.

SAUL

Who and what art thou?

DAVID

Knowest thou not me? I am David, son of Jesse.

SAUL

He whom thine eyes first fall upon, he it is and his seed shall rule after thee.

MICHAL *pleadingly*

David, whom thou hast called the sweet singer of Israel.

DAVID

My lord king!

SAUL

David! And it is *thou* shalt sit upon my throne?

With fearful outburst of passion.

Usurper, supplanter, viper that I have nourished in my bosom.

He takes the dagger from his girdle and makes as if to stab DAVID. MICHAL *interposes herself, staying him momentarily.*

MICHAL

Nay, father, my father, you are mad. David hath fought for us this night, for you and for me. Behold these that would have slain you.

SAUL *looks about him at the dead, at* DAVID *who still kneels, at the* WITCH *who supports on her lap the head of her son.*

SAUL

You have done this for me?

DAVID

For the king and the king's daughter.

SAUL

Rise up, my son. The gibbering prophet has lied to me, and this evil one. Yet have I also sinned, seeking knowledge from spirits that peep and mutter.

A noise of troops heard coming. Shouts and huzzahs. DAVID *opens the shutters.*

DAVID

It is the army of Israel marching from Ephes-Dammim. For lo, it is already morning.

MICHAL *opens the door and the light streams in. The noise grows louder.*

SAUL *to* MICHAL

Yet do I fear him, because of the prophecy.

MICHAL

He is my betrothed

SHOUTS

Goliath slain. Great is David our champion. David, David!

SAUL *goes to the door. The procession halts.*

Saul, Saul! Mighty is Saul. The Philistines have fallen.

SAUL

Hearken, my people.

The PEOPLE *enter the hut. They fall back, leaving* SAUL *and* DAVID *in the* C.

This is David, the Champion of Israel, who hath slain Goliath, son of the Rephaim.

PEOPLE

Huzzah!

SAUL

craftily, looking at DAVID *with narrow eyes of hatred and fear.*

But to win the hand of Michal the princess he is not content to stop with a little, but is zealous for larger victory. Is it not so, my son David?

SAUL *turns to* DAVID, *a grim smile on his face.*

DAVID

I will accomplish to the uttermost for her sake, my lord.

MICHAL

Behold, my father, he has done already—enough!

SAUL *does not heed her.*

SAUL

For her sake then, and for mine whom he loves so well, he will sally into the country of the

Philistines, utterly to abolish our ancient foe. He will take of them twenty towns, their captains and their young men, and their banners will he bring back to Saul, his king.

Again he smiles grimly at DAVID.

Is it not so, my son David?

DAVID

It is as you will, lord king.

SAUL

It is my will, and Michal's also.

He takes her arm sternly. She bows her head in assent.

DAVID

So be it, O Saul!

His enthusiasm rises.

I will conquer your foe and they shall be even as these are, dead at your feet, O king.

He seizes a banner from a standard-bearer and raises it aloft.

Against the Philistines! The banner of David! Who with me?

SHOUTS

I, I.

DAVID *moves to the door, the people following. He waves the banner aloft.*

MICHAL *weeping*

He is a dead man already. You have murdered my David. Oh, father, my father!

DAVID

Nay, I return! In the service of the king and the king's daughter!

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE II

ACT III

SCENE I: ROOM IN SAUL'S PALACE. *A richly decorated room on the ground floor, curtains, hangings of Tyrian purple and silk, cushions on the floor, swinging lamps, fretted work, sconces with candles, a chair of state,* R C, *with sculptured legs in the likeness of kneeling lions, an ottoman,* L C, *a harp hung on wall,* L. *Low stairs,* 1 E R; 2 E R *lead to upper galleried rooms in the palace.* L E *conducts to street.* C, *back-stage is a broad-latticed window, opening to the floor. The upper half of the shutters is open, showing the sky of night. Lower half closed, but not so high that a man may not enter from the street by overleaping it. Below the window is a divan. It is night. The candles and lamps are lighted. A circle of sewing-women and tailors squat on the floor, busily occupied with their work. Heaps of gauzy rainbow-colored material about them. Men cut out, with the aid of rule. Women embroider and sew. They work in silence wearily. One after another, several fall*

asleep, sinking downward on the floor. They are prodded with a rule by him who seems chief tailor. Enter, 2 E R, JONATHAN *and* MICHAL. *The sleepers spring up, resume their work.* MICHAL *walks impetuously to them with a motion of the hands to dismiss and scatter.*

MICHAL

What do ye here this hour of the night? Get up. Begone!

The Workers arise, looking puzzled.

JONATHAN

Sister, Saul has bidden them work the night through, to prepare bridal garments against the bridal.

MICHAL

with intense indignation

My bridal garments! My bridal! There shall be no bridal. Get up! Begone!

The Workers scatter, some up the stairs, 1 E R, *the men by* 2 E R. MICHAL *sweeps up the stuffs, throws them aside against the divan,* C, *kicks them together contemptuously.*

Hateful garments! My bridal with Phaltiel!

She imitates PHALTIEL'S *bleating laugh.*

JONATHAN

It is late. You are not well. You should rest and sleep.

MICHAL *sits on the divan, kicking up the stuffs constantly with her feet.*

I cannot sleep, I cannot sleep. I cannot rest, for thinking of David who does not return.

She jumps up, tosses the stuffs aside with her foot.

I cannot rest the soles of my feet upon them. They hurt me like irons. Oh, David, David, why did you not return?

JONATHAN

David may yet return.

MICHAL

He has been slain among those savage Philistines. Ah, me!

JONATHAN *puts an arm around her, leads her away,* 1 E R.

JONATHAN

Rest a little, Michal. Perhaps the morning will bring better things.

MICHAL

There is no rest for me.

Exit MICHAL, 1 E R.

JONATHAN

I would I could help her, but there is no help in me. Phaltiel will come betimes in the morning with the betrothal ring. Saul is zealous for the betrothal. If David returns, it will be too late, too late.

A tap at the shuttered window, C.

Who is that?

He goes to window, answers a voice, great surprise.

You, you!

Enter, L E, *a servant to extinguish the lights.* JONATHAN *turns.*

In a very low voice to the person outside.

Hush! Wait!

To the Servant.

Leave that lamp and the candle in that sconce.

The Servant extinguishes all but the two and exit, L.

Yes, all is well. No one is about. Saul? He sleeps. She is in her chamber. Yes, enter, enter quickly. Ah!

As JONATHAN *pushes open the shutter,* DAVID *springs into the room. He is wrapped about in a traveller's cloak so that his face is scarcely discernible.*

DAVID *boyishly*

You would not have known me. Confess!

Embracing him.

JONATHAN

To me you are as my own brother.

DAVID *returns to window and reaches out after something.*

What have you there?

DAVID

bringing a pack into the room

My passport, the byword. Stuffs for this "bridal." It was the only way the keepers of the gates would admit me. Tell me, Jonathan, of this bridal. The tale is not a true one?

JONATHAN

closing entirely the shutters

Of that, later. Your tidings? Your men? Is the tale true? We have heard of death, disaster?

DAVID *joyously*

My men are without the gates. Oh, Jonathan, my brother, victory has been ours. I have taken the banners of twenty cities. Michal is mine.

JONATHAN

David, my brother, I am yours to the end, but Michal——

DAVID

Speak quickly!

JONATHAN

Is promised to another.

DAVID

after a moment of deep agitation

By her wish?

JONATHAN

She has cried for you day and night.

DAVID

I must see her.

JONATHAN

It is late. In the morning——

DAVID

Now! In the morning there will be other matters. It is for this I have come.

JONATHAN

I will call her.

He starts to R.

DAVID

Wait. Let us swear an oath together that whatever come between us twain, our souls shall be knit together.

JONATHAN

Ah, David, your voice pierces me with foretaste of trouble.

DAVID

Through dark and despair, by fire and by sword, shall I win to mine own. But between us, Jonathan——

JONATHAN

clasping DAVID'S *hand*

I swear!

DAVID

Jehovah do so to me and more also if I keep it not. Not only while yet I live will I show you kindness but I will not cut off my kindness from your house forever and ever.

After a solemn pause.

Now for Michal. Tell her not it is I, but—a merchant from Tyre.

JONATHAN *at* 2 E R

She will not come.

DAVID

With a message from David.

JONATHAN

She will come.

Exit JONATHAN, 1 E R. DAVID *sees his harp on the wall and takes it down, strumming it softly. He sings to himself, his face upturned to the stairway.*

DAVID

Behold, thou art fair, my love,
Behold, thou art fair.
As the rose of Sharon
Or the lily of the valleys,
Or the flower among thorns,
So is my love among women.
Awake unto me, my sister, my love, my undefiled,
It is the voice of thy beloved that calleth, saying:
Awake unto me!
Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister,
My bride, awake, awake!

During the song, MICHAL *has softly opened the curtains at the head of the low flight of stairs and comes softly down. She is in rose-colored draperies, her black hair falling in plaits and twisted*

with ribbons. She pauses when she sees DAVID *and is dazed, rubbing her eyes to clear the films of sleep. She advances down the stairs very slowly. As the harp-music dies away she speaks.*

MICHAL

I dream! Glorious vision of my head. O dream, O spirit!

DAVID *retreats, walking backward, till he has reached the wall,* L, *and hung his harp. Then with a sudden dramatic change of attitude and gait, he approaches her briskly, speaking in the eager tone of a seller.*

DAVID

Lady, I am the merchant of stuffs from Tyre. I have——

MICHAL *is mystified, thinks she has dreamed.*

MICHAL

Where is that other?

DAVID

What other, lady? There is only I. My servant waits in the antechamber.

He points to L.

MICHAL

I had a dream. It is gone. Your message?

DAVID

Princess, I have stuffs——

MICHAL *imperiously*

Now is not the hour for buying and selling. Your message.

DAVID

Your patience, princess, but I must obey the will of him that sent me. Such marvellous excellent stuffs, in color like the rainbow, in texture like the morning mist——

MICHAL

Ah, peace, peace. They interest me not.

DAVID

Thin as spider webs, yet strong as the cords that bound Samson.

MICHAL

Open them quickly that we may have done with this talk.

MICHAL *seats herself wearily on the ottoman.* DAVID, *to her surprise, seats himself at her side on the cushions.*

DAVID

still in the inspired tone of an eccentric merchant

I have sold to the princes of Tyre and Sidon, to

Pharaoh's daughter and to the Queen of Sheba——

MICHAL

Enough!

She has scarcely looked at DAVID. *This fact, with the dimness of the light, his different attire, masked voice and the change in him that months of campaign have wrought, keep her from recognizing him.*

DAVID

But for you alone have I kept one stuff, and sold it to none other.

MICHAL *begins to show interest.*

I have myself woven it for the young bride on her betrothal.

MICHAL *rises in great anger.*

MICHAL

Out, I will have none of bride-stuffs and betrothal veils.

DAVID *goes to his pack which is below the window,* C.

DAVID

It is the wish of him who sent me.

While DAVID'S *back is turned,* MICHAL *takes the cushions on which he has been sitting and tosses*

them into the far corner of the room. Laughing, DAVID *returns.*

Forgive the laughter, but the joy I am about to spread before your eyes——

MICHAL *takes the candle from its sconce.*

MICHAL *mocking*

We need a brighter light to see this stuff, this morning mist, this rainbow web——

DAVID *has returned from the window empty-handed. He takes the candle from her and places it on the table.*

DAVID

Your pardon, princess, but there needs no light—

Something in DAVID'S *tone and manner arrests* MICHAL'S *attention and she stands still, as if fascinated.*

for the fabric itself sheds radiance round about it. It is woven in heaven for the young and the pure. They that wear it wisely may wear it always. They will walk as angels and no harm may come near them, neither will they ever be troubled.

MICHAL *eagerly*

Is it to be bought for gold?

DAVID

Gold, nay, much gold, will not buy it, for it is without price.

MICHAL

I should like it well.

DAVID

It would become you well.

MICHAL

By what name do you call it?

DAVID

Some do but call it the fabric of a dream.

MICHAL

Ah, show it me!

DAVID *stretches out his arms as if he were displaying folds of a garment between them.*

DAVID

Do you not see it? Do you not know it?

MICHAL

more and more wonderingly

By what token shall I know it?

DAVID *takes from his bosom the withered white rose of Act II.*

DAVID

By this!

MICHAL

The rose, the white rose! My David.

DAVID

taking her to his breast

This is the fabric of heaven that folds us, love, love, love.

MICHAL

Ah, David, but this cannot last. To-morrow——

DAVID

What?

MICHAL

My betrothal.

DAVID

It shall be with David.

MICHAL

My father will not suffer you, when you come defeated, forlorn.

DAVID

And you?

MICHAL

Whither thou goest I will go
And where thou lodgest there will I lodge.
Come, let us depart this night together.

DAVID

Nay.

MICHAL

You will not fly with me? Ah, but you must not be found here. It will be morning soon.

DAVID

I will come for you at daybreak. Your father shall give you into my hands.

MICHAL

in doubt and grief, denying

My father—shall give me—to you, to you—as you are!

DAVID

As I am, in these rags, he shall call me son.

He goes to window, C.

MICHAL

It must be soon, soon!

DAVID

At daybreak.

MICHAL *listens at* R.

MICHAL

Hark, Saul is stirring. The servants are about. You must go.

DAVID

I will go and return. Fear not.

Exit DAVID, C. *A servant enters,* L, *extinguishes the lights.* MICHAL *keeps him from the window.*

MICHAL

Does the day promise fair?

SERVANT

There bodes a storm, princess.

MICHAL

But the sunset was clear.

SERVANT *going to* C *window*

The sun rises red. Look out, princess!

MICHAL

leaning with her back to the shutters

I do not wish to look. It is enough.

Servant looks surprised. Exit L. MICHAL *flings open the shutters and looks out. She croons to herself longingly.*

O thou sun, stand still in the heavens till DAVID, my David return. Stand still, have pity on me till David, my David return.

As she leans thus from the lattice, SAUL *and* AHINOAM *enter,* 2 E R, *deep in conversation.*

SAUL

What is love? Pff! A cobweb glistering in the dew. Pinch it between your fingers. Gone.

AHINOAM

But Michal's heart will be a fire shut up.

SAUL

The fire will pass. I doubt not that ere this David has become food for beasts of the field.

MICHAL *flings herself from the divan and stands stormily before them. They had not before seen her.*

MICHAL

It is a lie. He lives.

Exit MICHAL, 2 E R.

SAUL *sternly*

Michal!

Enter, L, *servant.*

SERVANT

My lord, Phaltiel seeks audience.

SAUL

Bring him hither.

Exit, L, *servant and enter almost immediately*

PHALTIEL. *He is richly dressed, sleek, more repulsive than ever.*

SAUL

Your petition.

PHALTIEL

My lord, these months have I waited and now I beg you, delay no longer. Give me this day Michal for my betrothed.

SAUL *to the servant*

Request the princess Michal to come hither.

Exit servant, 2 E R.

PHALTIEL

Behold, how my bones are wasted with the travail of my desire!

SAUL

not heeding PHALTIEL, *to* AHINOAM

She is stubborn-hearted and delays to come. I will subdue her to my will.

AHINOAM

Deal gently with the damsel.

Enter, R, MICHAL. *At sight of* PHALTIEL *she stands.*

SAUL

Hither. What do you fear?

To PHALTIEL, *grimly.*

Take her by the hand. Lead your lady.

MICHAL *puts her hands behind her and advances.*

MICHAL

I will come alone.

SAUL

You are chastened in mien. Has the night taught you understanding?

MICHAL

Yes, father.

SAUL

And good cheer?

MICHAL

Yes, father.

SAUL

How honey-sweet her lips. Art ready for the betrothal?

MICHAL

Yes, father.

SAUL *much pleased*

Give your hand to Phaltiel's charge and he will put on the betrothal ring.

PHALTIEL *flourishes the ring from his bosom.*
MICHAL *withdraws.*

MICHAL

But not with him. I am in truth ready for the betrothal, but not with him.

SAUL

With whom, prithee?

MICHAL

With David.

SAUL *laughs long and bitterly.*

SAUL

Where is he, then, this David of yours?

MICHAL

He will come.

SAUL

Will come, will come! It is a tale grown old.

MICHAL

He will come at sunrise.

AHINOAM

Do you know, daughter?

MICHAL

I know.

PHALTIEL *goes to window.*

PHALTIEL

My lord, the sun is red above the horizon. I can no longer wait.

MICHAL *seizes a sand-glass from the table.*

MICHAL

Till the sands fall through, till the sands fall through.

AHINOAM

Grant the child her wish.

SAUL

So be it.

PHALTIEL

Oh, my lord king——

SAUL

I have said.

MICHAL *stands,* C, *watching the hour-glass in her hands. All watch her.*

PHALTIEL

Whence comes this lover? From the heaven?

MICHAL

Yes, heaven will send him.
Pause.

PHALTIEL

The sands are nigh spent.

MICHAL

Mother, I beg you, watch at the lattice.
AHINOAM *goes to the window to watch. Pause.*

PHALTIEL

The sands are through.

MICHAL

Nay, nay.

SAUL

The glass is empty.
MICHAL, *in wild despair, dashes the hour-glass upon the floor.* PHALTIEL *takes her hands.* AHINOAM *and* SAUL *stand beside them.* JONATHAN *rushes in,* L.

JONATHAN

He comes, he comes.

PHALTIEL

Too late.

MICHAL

'Tis not too late.

DAVID, *all breathless, still in his rags and tatters, rushes in,* L.

DAVID

I, David! I come to claim the bride.

PHALTIEL *rises to the supreme moment of his life.*

PHALTIEL

My bride.

DAVID, *on his way to* MICHAL, *thrusts* PHALTIEL *aside so violently that he staggers against the wall.*

DAVID

Mine.

SAUL *sternly steps between him and* MICHAL.

SAUL

Insolent, who are you to step between the king and the man the king has chosen?

DAVID

Your promise, O king.

SAUL

My promise!

DAVID

Need I remind Saul of his promise, first before the field of Ephes-Dammim, where I slew the

giant Goliath, and second on that night when I went forth from the—house of sorcery to take the Philistine towns?

SAUL

Where are those Philistine towns you boasted to lay low?

DAVID

In the dust, my lord.

PHALTIEL *is creeping as far as possible from* DAVID *to* L.

SAUL

You come alone in rags with this pirate's story.

DAVID

Alone, in rags, but the cities are laid low.

AHINOAM *to* SAUL

My lord, let him offer proof.

DAVID

The word of David.

SAUL *to* JONATHAN

Summon the guard.

Exeunt, L, JONATHAN *and* PHALTIEL.

MICHAL

Believe him, my father.

SAUL *tauntingly*

A brave bridegroom, forsooth, in your purple and fine linen. Only one thing lacks, the chain of fine gold, about his neck, for a bridegroom meet.

Enter, L, *the armed guard, two men and* JONATHAN.

To the men.

Take him and bind him.

DAVID

My friends, I ask ye all to witness how Saul has forsworn his oath. I am come victor, and this is my reward, a prison and a chain.

SAUL

Take him and chain him. He is mad.

As the men approach, DAVID *turns fiercely and has almost overthrown them.*

SAUL *to* DAVID

David, you that I brought from the sheepcotes, I your king, command.

DAVID *gives over his resistance and folds his arms.*

DAVID

I obey my king.

SAUL

Lay down your weapon.

DAVID *lays his sword on the floor. It so happens that it lies between him and* MICHAL.

MICHAL

Ah, David, that drawn sword lies between you and me.

SAUL *to the men*

Take him and bind him.

The soldiers, wholly on DAVID'S *side, sullenly hesitate to obey.*

Laggards, do your work. Ye refuse?

MICHAL

Father, behold how David, whom you hate, is more loyal than they.

A steady tramp, tramp, of approaching men is heard from this time till DAVID'S *followers appear.*

DAVID

Nay, princess Michal, they, too, are loyal to their king.

SAUL *angry*

What?

DAVID

They appeal from Saul the tyrant to Saul the king.
Cries outside the window.

PEOPLE

David, David!

AHINOAM *to* SAUL

My lord, do you hear the people?

PEOPLE

Open to us, David, David!
The cries continue from this point till the doors are open.

SAUL

What is this?

JONATHAN

They are the followers of David, acclaiming the victory.

AHINOAM

They will break down the walls if they see not David.

SAUL

Open to them.
The soldiers open the door L *and the window* C. *The people crowd in.* ELIAB *is spokesman for the people.*

ELIAB

Where is David that I may give these banners to his hand?

DAVID *and* ELIAB *meet and* DAVID *receives a sheaf of tattered banners.*

DAVID

My lord, I went out, as you bade me, for the reward of Michal's hand, as I desired, and I smote the twenty cities, I and these my brave followers and we laid them low.

PEOPLE

Huzza.

DAVID *lays a banner at* SAUL'S *feet.*

DAVID

The banner of Ashdod.

PEOPLE

Huzza.

DAVID

with a second banner

The banner of Ekron.

PEOPLE

Huzza.

DAVID

The banner of Gaza.

PEOPLE

Huzza.

DAVID *lays the sheaf of banners at* SAUL'S *feet.*

DAVID

And the banners of all these cities laid at your feet,
O my king.

PEOPLE

Huzza.

DAVID

I ask my reward.

PEOPLE

The reward, the reward.

ELIAB

Robe him and crown him, O Saul!

PEOPLE

The robe, the chain!

SAUL

Oh David, oh ye people——

PEOPLE

interrupting in their enthusiasm

The robe, the crown!

AHINOAM

The people demand it.

MICHAL

leading DAVID *to* SAUL

My father!

ELIAB

David and Michal!

SAUL *to* JONATHAN

Put upon him your mantle and your robe.

JONATHAN *clothes* DAVID *in his scarlet robe. The people applaud.*

MICHAL

I will put upon his neck the chain of gold.

She takes from her neck the golden chain she wears. DAVID *kneels before her and she puts the chain upon him.*

PEOPLE

David and Michal. The bridegroom and the bride.

MICHAL

He is the prince beloved, for he is your son, is he not, father?

SAUL

My people, he is in truth the prince beloved, a captain over my peoples. Leave us together.

He motions to the people to go out. All exeunt, L *and* C, *except* DAVID *and* MICHAL. DAVID *kneels before* SAUL.

Kneel not to me. I am he that should kneel to ask your forgiveness, my son David.

DAVID *rises.*

And now your harp, your voice in song, a sign of peace.

MICHAL *brings the harp to* DAVID.

MICHAL

Too long it has been silent.

DAVID *sits on ottoman,* L C.

DAVID

What song shall I sing, O Saul?

MICHAL *stands by him.*

SAUL

A song of peace, for I am weary of war.

To MICHAL.

Come to your father, my child.

MICHAL *goes to her father, sits on a cushion by his knee, his hand on her head.*

DAVID

What song, beloved?

MICHAL

Of your childhood days in those dear hills.
DAVID, *strumming lightly on his harp, sings.*

DAVID

singing the song of Act I

The Lord my shepherd is,
I shall not want.
In the green pastures shall I lie,
He leads me by still waters.

A triumphal song is heard, faint in the distance, but approaching the palace.

The Lord my soul restores,
He leadeth me
In paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
For His name's sake.

SAUL

How sweet your voice to me, my son David!
The triumphal procession comes nearer and the words of the women are audible.

WOMEN

O clap your hands, all ye daughters,
Shout and greatly rejoice——

SAUL *listens to their voices, disturbed.* MICHAL *leans forward to* DAVID, *anxious.*

MICHAL

Play on, sweet singer.

SAUL *muttering*

In praise of David.

DAVID *singing*

Yea, though I walk in night,
Through death's dark valley——

The procession comes in sight. Women robed in white, carrying torches, file slowly past the window.

WOMEN

O clap your hands, all ye daughters,
Shout and greatly rejoice.
Saul, Saul his thousands hath he slain,
But David his ten thousands.

SAUL'S *face darkens. His hand steals to the hilt of his javelin.*

SAUL

David, David! Even the women chant his praise.

MICHAL

Sing on, sing on!

DAVID

Yea, though I walk in night,
Through death's dark valley.

WOMEN

in a sudden burst of song

Saul, Saul his thousands hath he slain,
But David his ten thousands.

DAVID *singing*

No evil will I fear——

SAUL

Curse you, curse you, curse you. Traitor!
With his words, he hurls his javelin across the room at DAVID. MICHAL, *with a cry, flings her weight on his arm, causing the javelin to swerve. It strikes the wall behind* DAVID.

MICHAL

Flee, flee for your life. The madness is on him.

DAVID

arisen to his feet, in an attitude of horror
Saul, my king.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE I: THE TABERNACLE: *The gorgeous pageantry of the Tabernacle arrayed for the bridal of* MICHAL *at the Feast of Trumpets. Hangings of purple, blue, and gold. The altar with the golden candlesticks and cherubim. Priests and Levites in their rich robes grouped around the altar. Two exits, the great central door and smaller door,* L. *Enter,* C, *two priests, blowing on silver trumpets. They are followed by musicians, with tabret, harp, and psaltery. After their evolutions, comes a procession of maidens with cymbals, dancing a slow religious dance. These are arrayed on* L, *in front of the musicians. Opposite are the priests and Levites. Then, to the sound of music from the trumpeters, come the courtiers led by* MERAB *and* ADRIEL. *These take their places,* R C.

Enter alone, C, PHALTIEL, *in bridal splendor. A low hiss runs through the group of young men and maidens.* PHALTIEL *glances sullenly.*

All look expectantly to C, *whence comes the sound of low wailing,* MICHAL'S *voice. Enter* JONATHAN *and* QUEEN AHINOAM, *followed after a moment by* SAUL, *leading* MICHAL. MICHAL *is in white, her long hair in braids bound with gold, and a gold girdle round her waist. She is ashen pale and is dragged rather than led. They slowly advance to the altar. When she lifts her head and sees the array of priests and* PHALTIEL *waiting for her by the altar, she moans.*

MICHAL

Ah, no, no!

SAUL *to the musicians*

Strike up.

The musicians play.

Phaltiel, stand forward.

As PHALTIEL *advances* MICHAL *retreats.*

Oh all ye peoples, tribes of Israel, my children hereunto assembled, these are the nuptials of the princess Michal with Phaltiel, prince of Laish. Where is the high priest of the tribe of Benjamin? Let him join their hands and put on the solemn ring of the covenant.

A pause, but no high priest steps forth.

JONATHAN

My lord king, the high priest was stricken down as he set forth for the tabernacle.

A groan from all.

SAUL

What boots it?

To a priest.

Ashur, take your place in his stead.

ASHUR, *in his stately robes, steps to* C *from the body of priests. He is reluctant. The music sounds again as* ASHUR *leads together* MICHAL *and* PHALTIEL. ASHUR *takes from* PHALTIEL *the ring and holds it on high.*

Behold the solemn ring of the covenant! Is there any man to deny this covenant?

A commotion at the door, C. *The people shudder away as, on horseback at full gallop, enters* DAVID, *his spear flashing from* R *to* L. ELIAB *and* ABINADAB *follow and stand guard on each side of the great central door.*

DAVID

I deny! I deny! I deny the righteousness of the covenant.

He reaches the spot where the royal group stand, leans from the saddle, smites down ASHUR.

Thus have I cut in two both ring and priest and—
lifting MICHAL *to the saddle beside him, amid the frozen stares of the congregation.*
Thus does the master take his own!
Sharply wheeling, he gallops up-stage to door.

SAUL *choking in wrath*

Traitor and outlaw! Has no man a weapon?

DAVID *at door*

The weapon is mine. By sword and by fire have
I sworn to have and to hold mine own.

SAMUEL, *a venerable figure, appears suddenly at* L *and holds up his hand.*

SAMUEL

David, halt. By sword and by fire, but not in
the name of the Most High. In the name of
the Most High, I command thee lay down
thy burden.

A pause. DAVID *stands reluctant, his eyes fixed on* SAMUEL.

Forbear to desecrate His holy Temple. In the
name of thine own high calling, forbear!

DAVID *gives over* MICHAL *to his two men-at-arms by the door. Her insensate form shows that she is unconscious. They carry her within, where two*

maidens tend her. DAVID *alights and stands with bared head and weapon lowered.*

Get thee hence to the wilderness away from the wrath of Saul, to do penance and to wash away thy sin.

DAVID *smiting his breast*

In the name of mine own anointing I do obey, that Jehovah who is the respecter of oaths may also respect the oath that lies 'twixt me and her.

He points to MICHAL.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE I

ACT IV

SCENE II: THE CAVE OF ADULLAM: *A wild and rugged country, with a gray, tossing sky. Cliffs and rocks piled up as far as the eye can see.* R *is the entrance to the cave. Other exits,* L *and* C, *behind jags of rocks and boulders. Stones in front used as seats.*

Discovered are DAVID *and a wild group of his followers, ten or twelve. Among them the three mighties, his brothers,* ELIAB, ABINADAB, *and* SHAMMAH, *and* AMASA *and* ASAHEL, *archers, with their bows and arrows.*

The curtain goes up on a great clamor.

ALL

Down with Saul.

ELIAB

Death to the madman.

DAVID

Silence.

SHAMMAH

Down with the mad king.

DAVID

Silence.

More angry cries.

Silence. Obey your leader!

They are silent.

I say unto you, honor the king.

ELIAB

David, the prophecy has gone out that you are to be king of Israel and to this end Samuel anointed you.

DAVID

Because of this prophecy, shall we take up arms against the king? Even because of the prophecy, a thousand times no!

ALL

A cause, a cause!

DAVID

There shall be a cause for you. Are there outlaws among you, driven forth from house and home?

CRIES

Yes, yes.

DAVID

Outlaw am I. Debtors are there, your faces ground by the pitiless tax-gatherer?

CRIES

Yes, yes.

DAVID

Debtor am I. Malcontents are there, your hope as a spider's web? Haggards of the rock, criers for justice?

CRIES

Yes, yes.

DAVID

All that and more am I. Yet with a great hope possessed that out of confusion will peace arise, from the wine of violence and the bread of tears, peace that floweth like a river. Let us then stand shoulder to shoulder, you for me, I for you!

ALL

For David, for David.

DAVID

Robbers and oppressors we shall not be. What shall bind us together, love or hate, hate or love?

ELIAB

Lovers of David, lovers of David!

DAVID

To your stations, as I have appointed. Remember the password if any seeks admittance. "What come you for to seek?" "The Lion of Judah."

ALL *as they go out*

The lion of Judah.

The three mighties and DAVID *remain.*

ELIAB

Who knows the watchword outside of our cave?

DAVID

Only they that are my friends.

ABINADAB

And they are easily numbered. Not of the palace, I will swear.

DAVID

One there is in the palace my friend. That one knows the password. None other.

SHAMMAH

Trust none, I say.

Cries of the men outside among the cliffs are heard.

CRIES

What come you for to seek?

VOICE

The Lion of Judah.

CRIES

Let him pass.

All look questioningly to the cliffs, C. *Enter* MICHAL, *disguised as a shepherd.*

DAVID *stepping forward*

If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, my heart shall be knit unto you, but if ye come to betray me—

At this word MICHAL *starts.*

to mine enemies, the God of our fathers look thereon and rebuke it.

MICHAL

Yours am I, David, and on your side.

At the sound of her voice DAVID *looks at her closely and moves a step nearer.*

ABINADAB *laughingly*

A grasshopper in sandals, forsooth!

SHAMMAH

What seek you refuge from, the assault of a mighty blue-fly?

DAVID

Depart to your stations. When I have need of you I will blow one blast upon my bugle.

ELIAB

We shall obey your call.

Exeunt, C, *the three mighties.*

DAVID *passionately*

Michal, Michal, why have you come? Has Saul relented?

MICHAL

No, no.

DAVID

Child, child, did you not fear? These savage cliffs, these outlawed men!

MICHAL

I had the password.

DAVID

What brings you? At your peril have you come, like a bird that hastes to the snare and knows it not.

MICHAL

I came to you.

DAVID *enfolding her*

Nest thee, then, my bird. Ah, but thy lips are sweeter than wine.

MICHAL *withdraws from* DAVID *and looks up into his face with a deep question.*

MICHAL

David, have I not proved my love, that I would leave all and follow you?

DAVID

I ask no proof. I believe you always, as you me.

MICHAL *shakes her head slowly.*

Doubt not the future. It is in His hands. Soon you must go, I know too well. Let us dream, dream, here at the parting of the ways.

MICHAL *springs from him in indignation.*

MICHAL

David, I have risked all for you, and you? You count me least of your ambitions.

DAVID *in wonder*

Have I not—have I not——?

MICHAL

Talk not of battles and violence with sword. That is man's pastime. Many men, for love of a

woman, have overcome cities. There is something between your heart and mine, David.

DAVID

Between us twain, Michal?

MICHAL

A king's crown.

DAVID

Would to God, Michal, I were a shepherd lad again.

He presses his head as if there were a weight upon it.

The crown, the crown, is upon my forehead a crown of thorns.

He paces to and fro, heedless of MICHAL.

The burden is greater than I can bear. Take the burden of this crown from me, O my God.

MICHAL

Cast it under foot and grind it to fragments.

A pause. DAVID *turns to her.*

DAVID

Speak again.

MICHAL

I bring this message from Saul my father. Renounce your hope of the kingdom, he will re-

ceive you as his son, and—David—I shall be yours.

DAVID *opens his arms to her.*

DAVID

I swear it. Ah, nay, nay! It is denied me by the oath of mine anointing.

He goes with bowed head from her.

MICHAL *following him*

Is your love then so little?

DAVID *to himself*

Verily, my feet are too weak to tread this path. As a blind man I stagger and fall.

MICHAL

This is the measure of the stature of your love.

DAVID

Who has determined this to be the measure? Who has poisoned your mind against me?

MICHAL

My father has—counselled me.

DAVID

Listen, Michal. There is a law mightier even than this law of love. By this law in the be-

ginning of things were our lives ordained, all our times appointed. Not often is it vouchsafed to any man to see what the future has in store. That which is to be is not of my doing nor of Saul's nor any man's undoing. It is the law of God, who setteth the stars in their places and the ocean that he overstep not his barrier. Do you understand?

MICHAL *awed*

I understand.

DAVID

But believe not that glory maketh any man to rejoice. Even of the dust have I eaten, for between thee and me does this crown come.

MICHAL *kneeling*

Forgive me, my lover.

DAVID

I have naught to forgive.

MICHAL

There is something you do not know. I came here—my father was aware—he will follow—Ah, David, I was so sure you would renounce the ambition—I did not understand!

DAVID

What is your meaning?

MICHAL

My father wrought so upon me. Ah, my lord!

DAVID

What have you done?

MICHAL

I have betrayed you, you will say. But not willingly.

The clashing of arms and cries of fighters are heard. The noise waxes louder throughout the next few speeches.

DAVID

You have betrayed me! Ah, my brave followers!

He makes as if to join them outside, running to L, *but* MICHAL *clings to him.*

MICHAL

Leave me not alone, leave me not!

DAVID *takes her to the cave opening,* R.

DAVID

Hide there. It will be safe.

MICHAL

No, I shall stay in the open and with you.

A scattered remnant of DAVID'S *followers, bravely keeping the cliffs, are pushed backward by their assaulters and so enter,* C *and* L, *backward, still fighting.* SAUL'S *men follow, their panoply of armor in contrast with the tatters of* DAVID'S *men. A sharp struggle, then all fall in death except two of* SAUL'S *followers and one of* DAVID'S, *the youth* ASAHEL. ASAHEL *rushes to* DAVID, *his bow in his hand, his sheaf of arrows at his belt, the two in pursuit.*

ASAHEL

I am struck to the heart.

He falls dead. DAVID *seizes* ASAHEL'S *bow and arrows and shoots at the pursuers. They fall and* SAUL *enters,* C, *towering in his rage, his spear in his hand.*

SAUL

Vengeance is mine, at last, at last.

DAVID *steps forward fearlessly.*

DAVID

My lord king.

SAUL *poising his spear*

Trouble not yourself with lord, lord.

DAVID *baring his breast*

Death shall be welcome, for Michal has become my betrayer.

MICHAL *throws herself on her father's breast.*

MICHAL

Not him, father, not him.

SAUL

You have played your part. Stand back.

MICHAL

Spare him, father, for my sake.

SAUL

I will not deal with him as his deeds deserve. I will summon my men and they shall take him captive.

SAUL *blows two blasts on his bugle. A pause. There is no response. He blows again. Again a pause.*

DAVID

Oh my lord king, the dead do not waken, neither are the slain swift of foot.

SAUL

Slain for me!

DAVID *blows once. A long pause.*

Nay, the dead do not waken!

DAVID *blows again. Enter running, blood-stained and torn, the two mighties,* ELIAB *and* SHAMMAH.

ELIAB

My lord David!

DAVID

Where are your brethren?

ELIAB

Out of your body-guard, the ten that guarded the cliffs, we only remain. The king's men have fallen, every one.

DAVID *bows his head.* SAUL *throws his spear on the ground.*

SAUL

Rejoice over me, for I am in your hands.

DAVID

Far be it from me to rejoice over these that have fallen in my name. Lo, they have fought in jeopardy of their lives.

SAUL

Hasten to raise your weapon against me.

DAVID

I shall not put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed. After whom is the King of Is-

rael come out? My heart is unto you as it was of old.

MICHAL

Beseech him, father, that the past may be forgotten and that we may be at peace together.

SAUL

Give me here your solemn covenant to forswear the vain hope of the kingship, and lo, you shall have Michal to wife and peace and plenty all your days. But the crown to me and my house forever.

MICHAL

Swear to this covenant, David, for my sake.

SAUL

Why are you reluctant, my son David?

DAVID

You ask me to forswear the word of the Most High.

MICHAL

As you love me, David. A king's crown or your heart's desire.

DAVID

Other Hands than mine have placed the crown before me and other Hands must take it from my head.

MICHAL

Father, plead with him, beseech him, for a crown is but a little thing compared to the love of a life.

DAVID

Nay, Michal, but man is not stronger than God to contend with Him. Oh my lord king, I must await the word of the anointing. To forswear the word I am unable.

SAUL *in a rage*

I will smite you, hip and thigh. You and your followers I will put to the edge of the sword. You shall be harried and laid waste and forgotten utterly. Michal, swear unto me never again to look upon the face of this traitor David. Swear!

He forces her to her knees before him.

MICHAL

I swear.

SAUL *raises her to her feet and they go off to* C.

DAVID

I charge you, O Michal, to remember my love. Many waters will not quench love neither will the floods drown it. Nay, if a man would give all the substance of his house for love it would utterly be contemned.

To ELIAB *and* SHAMMAH.

See that the king and the king's daughter go safely forth.

ELIAB

We obey.

DAVID

Sound me salute from the various stations that I may know they have safely passed.

To SAUL *and* MICHAL.

Peace be with you.

Exeunt, C, SAUL, MICHAL, *and the mighties.* DAVID *stands in a listening attitude. Three salutes sound, more and more distant.* DAVID'S *head droops upon his breast. He sees the fallen figure of* ASAHEL *and lifts the still hand.*

In vain shall your mother await you at her window—she shall cry at her lattice—When cometh he, my son, my first-born?

He raises his arms to an attitude of prayer.
Acquaintance and friend puttest Thou from me,
My beloved removest Thou far from my sight.

CURTAIN

SECOND CURTAIN

TABLEAU—*Night, the sky strewn with faint stars and a camp-fire lighting weirdly the foreground of boulders where* DAVID'S *followers lie asleep. In the far distance, other fires, beacon-lights on the hills.* DAVID *still standing in the attitude of sorrow, arms upraised to heaven.*

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

SCENE I: AN OPEN SQUARE IN THE CITY OF GATH: *Evening. A paved city square with exterior of low stone buildings on* R *and* L. *Seen in the distance a broad plain and the blue Mediterranean, flecked with foam. Small grated windows in the houses are lighted, giving sign of watchers within. The back of the stage is the city wall flanked on the* R *by a watch-tower. Steps lead from the square to the top of the wall.* 1 E L *leads to the outer country.* 2 E L, *a door in the house of Achish, king of Gath.* R E *leads to other parts of the city and wall. On the* R *is a merchant's deserted booth. Wares are carelessly heaped up in the fashion of Eastern bazaars of to-day. In front is a stone bench for the buyers. On a table of the booth, an oriental lantern, lighted.*

Discovered, HURAI, *in warlike dress, and a Philistine asleep in the shadow of the steps,* C. *Pacing back and forth on the wall,* ELIAB. *On the bench,* R, AMASA.

AMASA

In the morning the battle again, clanking of sword and glittering of spear.

ELIAB

And may the battle be for us, for David and the men of Gath.

AMASA

How many be the Israelites that lie outside?

ELIAB

They are as the locusts for number.

Enter, R, DAVID, *absorbed, reading from a parchment scroll.*

DAVID

"To David, son of Jesse, armor-bearer of King Saul, greeting!" *For so was I in the former time.* "I, Michal, salute thee, in remembrance of those days at Gibeah and of that harp of thine, with lilies garlanded. Lay down, O David, thy sword. Take up again thy harp and lift thy voice in song. Forget the bitterness of thy heart and think upon them that showed thee kindness. Saul will relent toward thee if thou wilt go to him as once thou wast, not captain of out-

lawed and desperate men," *for so am I, Amasa,* "but the sweet singer of Israel, the greatly beloved of the king." *For so was I in the former time.* "Return, O David, to thy people. I, Michal, beseech thee."

AMASA

This came to you to-day?

DAVID

Not to-day. Many days ago. And this has been the answer, alas, war, war, war.

A wailing from the house of ACHISH. HURAI *and the Philistine stir uneasily in their sleep.*

AMASA

List, David, to the voice of weeping.

DAVID

Who are they?

ELIAB

They are the captive women, women of Israel——

DAVID

My countrywomen!

ELIAB

This night captured at the hands of one of the Philistine lords.

DAVID

as the weeping sounds again

Captive, my countrywomen! Their souls are sorrowful and they will not sleep. Bid them hither. Eliab, bid hither the captive women that I may speak comfortably to them.

ELIAB

I go to bring them.

Exit, 2 E L, ELIAB.

DAVID

My soul yearns for the daughters of my people. They reproach me in their hearts, even as does Michal, Saul's daughter.

AMASA

Has Michal not sworn belief in you? Yes, and Jonathan also, the king's son. He was to you as a brother.

DAVID

How may I believe that their heart is toward me as of old, when I am thus in the stronghold of their enemies? Ay, even in the Cave of Adullam Michal turned from me with reproaches.

He takes from his breast the parchment.

"I, Michal, salute thee, in remembrance of those days at Gibeah and of that harp of thine, with lilies garlanded." *Enter*, 2 E L, ELIAB, *with captive women. Addressing the women.* Fear not for yourselves at all, neither be troubled. This shall be for you all a place of safety and a refuge in time of war. *The women bow and turn to pass out.* Peace be with you. DAVID *scans them carefully as they pass him. Exeunt*, 2 E L, *the women.* Eliab, were all the captive women here?

ELIAB

There remains yet one.

DAVID

She would not come?

ELIAB

She scorned me utterly and set me at nought.

DAVID

Bring her hither.

ELIAB

She has the bearing of one who commands. I failed before her.

DAVID

Send her to me. Amasa, you are more honey-mouthed, go to her, but command her not. Entreat her courteously.

AMASA

I go.

DAVID

Give her a—token. *He thinks.* A token from me. *He takes from his neck the chain.* This chain.

AMASA

hesitating to accept it

It is Michal's.

DAVID

It is mine.

AMASA

The chain that Michal put around your neck on that day of your gladness.

DAVID

That day of my sadness. Take it.

AMASA *as he goes to* L

The chain he has worn so long——

Exit AMASA 2 E L.

DAVID

I will not wear it again till Michal herself puts it upon me.

ELIAB *to the sleeping men*

Arouse you, arouse you! *They begin to awake.* Up, it is already the third watch. *They awake.*

HURAI

Is it morning?

ELIAB

It is your watch upon the western wall. *They rise.*

DAVID

It will soon be morning. Yet it seems the night has lingered for a cycle.

Exeunt HURAI *and the Philistine.*

Speak to me further of this captive woman. She is long in coming.

ELIAB

Ay, she takes her time. She is proud as a king's daughter.

DAVID

You heard her voice, sorrowful like the wind among the cedars.

And full of music like the music of falling waters?
Answer me! Nay, answer me not, you may not
read the music of her voice.
How walked she, light-foot as the bird that
brushes the grasses
And they bend but break not under her feet?
Or sat she in quietness with bowed forehead,
Like the mourners in their places?

ELIAB

Surely, in so short a time I could not see so much.
Enter, 2 E L, MICHAL, *veiled, and holding in her hands the gold chain.*

DAVID

Lady, I thank you for your coming. Eliab,
guard the eastern defences.
Exit, 1 E L, ELIAB.

MICHAL

Your will with me?

DAVID

Michal!

MICHAL

Nay, come no nearer and call me not by name. I
am a captive woman and you my jailer.

DAVID

As Jehovah lives, my God and yours, my heart is toward you even as it was of old. Lift up your veil, I pray you, that we may see each other face to face.

MICHAL *bitterly*

You would have me stand before you unveiled, the more to grace your triumph.

DAVID

It is no triumph, but a day of desolation, a night of weeping.

MICHAL *lifts her veil.*

MICHAL

Speak and let me go in peace.

DAVID

Believe in me. This is all my prayer. If it were an enemy that reproached me, then could I bear it. But it is you, a woman mine equal, mine acquaintance, and my beloved.

MICHAL

My eyes bear witness against you that have seen you command the gates of Gath. Even by this chain also are you false, sending forth men to spill their blood that gave it you.

DAVID

The gift was yours.

MICHAL

And their blood is in my veins.

DAVID

I am here as a shelter from tempestuous days and the arrows of the envious. Believe it, Michal.

MICHAL

So I would fain believe. But the days came when I durst not believe. I was in derision daily. I cried out, because you were made a reproach to me. Then I said, "I will not make mention of him nor speak any more his name." But your name was in my heart as a burning fire shut up.

DAVID

Then the message by the hand of the scribe.

MICHAL

hiding her face in shame

A woman's heart fights for its life and will not be slain. On my knees did my heart cry out to you for mercy and you—gave me none.

DAVID

putting his hand to his breast

Mercy was in your hand to give, not mine. You the home-keeping, I the hunted.

MICHAL

Oh, it was shame to me, shame, that I should send to you, beg you, and you—heed not!

DAVID

Here within my breast your message has rested, under the chain your hands put about my neck. You remember?

MICHAL

I remember.

DAVID

You will put it once again about my neck.

MICHAL

Never!

DAVID

It shall be in token of perfect understanding. But here on my breast has your message lain, on my heart. I need not to open the scroll. Listen, Michal.

He repeats slowly.

"To David, son of Jesse, armor-bearer of King Saul, greeting!

I, Michal, salute thee, in remembrance of those days at Gibeah and of that harp of thine with lilies garlanded.

Lay down, O David, thy sword. Take up again thy harp and lift thy voice in song. Forget the bitterness of thine heart and think upon them that showed thee kindness.

Saul will relent toward thee if thou wilt go to him as once thou wast, not captain of outlawed and desperate men——"

MICHAL

For so are you.

DAVID

"—but the sweet singer of Israel, the greatly beloved of the king. Return, O David, to thy people. I——"

MICHAL

I, Michal, beseech thee! Those were my words. Those are still my words.

DAVID

Would I could prove to you my love, even in wandering and in exile. This night, perhaps,

the trial may come. And for you or any of your house I would spend my life-blood. And then—you would put the chain about my neck, in token of perfect understanding.

The sound of a trumpet is heard.

MICHAL

I am afeard.

DAVID

It is for the gathering together of the people. Stay, Michal. Fear not.

Enter, L *and* R, ACHISH, *king of Gath,* SAPH, ELIAB, *and others,* DAVID'S *followers and the Philistines.*

ACHISH

We will make him king over his people.

ALL

Ay, ay.

ACHISH

David, we have taken counsel together and I, king of Gath, have come to lay the matter before you.

DAVID

Speak on.

ACHISH

You know how our men have fallen for you upon the field. To-morrow, we wish you to lead out your followers to battle, you who till now have kept the defences. Lead them forth and then haply from Saul's army your countrymen will flock to your standard, those who loved you of old. We of Gath will stand by you and at the day's end the crown of Israel shall be upon your head. MICHAL *listens earnestly.* Saul and the house of Saul shall be beneath your feet and Philistia and Israel friends forever.

SAPH AND PHILISTINES

Forever!

DAVID

It needs but one word to make firm this compact—the word of David.

ACHISH

Your word, O David!

SAPH

Your word?

ELIAB

Give the word, *Yes.*

ABINADAB

Consent.

DAVID

You ask me to gather round my standard my followers and yours, and the followers of Saul who may defect from his ranks in battle—the craven and disloyal—and against the people of my tribe and of his to make war.

ACHISH AND SAPH

War, war!

DAVID

The reward—shall be the crown of Israel?

ACHISH

The crown of Israel!

DAVID

And the price?

ACHISH

The life of Jonathan and Saul.

SAPH

Their life.

ACHISH

And the word of David?

MICHAL

listening more and more intently

The word of David?

DAVID

The word of David is, in the name of his people, *No!*

ACHISH

What?

SAPH

He refuses?

ELIAB

There was ever a streak of madness in David.

SAPH

Madness! More evil than madness, I swear to you! Treason to Achish and to Gath!

PHILISTINES

suddenly veering to hostility

Traitor!

SAPH

Think not, Achish, that he is loyal to his persecutor, the mad king. How would this be possible?

PHILISTINES

No, no

SAPH

If he will not fight with us, he is against us. Let us put him to the test.

PHILISTINES

Down with David.

ELIAB

Insolent dogs!

A scuffle between the followers of DAVID *and the Philistines.*

DAVID *to his men*

Forbear! Let us have peace.

ACHISH *to Philistines*

Bide your time.

SAPH

Put him to the test!

ACHISH

Men of Gath, he has come to us from his people, hunted like a wild beast on the hills. He has been to me a friend and a lover. Even as an angel has his countenance been to me.

SAPH

Why, then, will he not fight with us and overthrow the madman who drove him hither?

PHILISTINES *led by* SAPH

Treason!

They move angrily toward DAVID.

MICHAL *to* DAVID

Answer them. They will slay you.

DAVID

Achish and ye men of Gath, listen to me. You say you do not believe in me nor in the pledge of fealty I have taken to your king? You say that in my heart I harbor treason, that I will turn against you in secret and betray your cause?

SAPH

That and more do we say.

DAVID

Well and good. If then I should lead forth my following against Israel, how quickly, O Philistines, I might join my forces with my countrymen and on the field of battle betray your cause, to benefit my own with the king of Israel!

ACHISH *to Philistines*

You hear?

They nod, following DAVID *intently.*

DAVID

In the crisis of battle easily might the balance be turned and you would be crushed by the overweight of Israel.

PHILISTINES

Ay, ay.

ACHISH

He speaks wisdom.

DAVID

This, were I disloyal to Gath, might be my way to Saul's favor. If you believe me traitor, fear to send me forth.

ACHISH

You hear?

PHILISTINES *satisfied*

Ay, ay.

DAVID

Go forth as you will and leave me warden of the walls and defender of your gates. This do I with all good will.

SAPH

What proof of his loyalty to us?

MICHAL *stepping forward*

Achish, king of Gath, and you his men, hear me, though I am but a captive and a woman.

ACHISH

Speak, Michal, daughter of Saul.

MICHAL

This night has David given proof of his loyalty to Gath.

ACHISH

Your meaning?

MICHAL

His loyalty this night to Saul. *Cheers of Philistines and Israelites.* For he who is loyal to the friend that has disowned him, will he not even more be loyal to the friend that stands by?

Enter, 1 E L, AMASA.

AMASA

I bring tidings.

ACHISH

Speak quickly.

AMASA

A messenger from Saul under cover of a flag of truce.

ACHISH

A truce! From Saul!

Enter, 1 E L, JONATHAN *and two soldiers carrying the flag.* JONATHAN *does not look at* DAVID. DAVID *leans toward* JONATHAN, *his face and attitude eloquent of love and anguish.*

JONATHAN

King Saul to the king of Gath, salutation! Oh Achish, as you know full well, the half of your valiant host perished to-day in the field of battle and are become food for the raven. The king of the Bene-Israel is encamped before your gates. O Achish, upon one condition will Saul withdraw his army. Give into our hands to do with as is fit, that desperate rebel you harbor, David of Bethlehem.

At JONATHAN'S *words,* DAVID *stifles a cry.*

ACHISH

Haply without condition from Saul shall Gath escape.

JONATHAN

Gath is doomed. Behold from the walls how she is circled about.

ACHISH

David we will not return to you.

ALL

No, no.

DAVID

looking earnestly to JONATHAN

Speak to me, Jonathan, my brother.

JONATHAN

disregarding DAVID

You hold Saul's daughter, Michal. Return to me Michal, and Saul will relinquish the battle.

ACHISH

By what sign shall Saul know on the instant that Michal is released?

JONATHAN *taking a lantern*

This light waved twice shall be for a sign of peace. We will strike our tents. We will sheathe our swords.

DAVID

fronting JONATHAN *so that perforce their eyes meet*

And for a sign of war?

JONATHAN *to* ACHISH

The light, waved once from the wall, shall be a sign of fire. A sign of refusal.

MICHAL

A sign of fire, a sign of refusal!

DAVID

holding his arms wide to JONATHAN

War! But not between us, not between us, Jonathan, my brother.

JONATHAN *refuses response, turning to* ACHISH.

JONATHAN

Your answer?

ACHISH

Michal we release.

MICHAL *clinging to* DAVID

David, speak for me.

DAVID

Michal will abide with the city of Gath and with David her captain.

JONATHAN *struck to the heart*

My sister!

MICHAL

I will never return to—that bridal.

JONATHAN *wheels to leave.* DAVID *intercepts him.*

DAVID *with intense emotion*

Jonathan, my brother—before we part!
He holds out his arms pleadingly.
By our oath of friendship sworn at my home-coming. Jonathan!

JONATHAN

That oath—

DAVID

in the words of Act III

Jehovah do so to me and more also if I keep it not. Not only while yet I live will I show you kindness, but I will not cut off my kindness from your house forever and ever.

JONATHAN *is slowly won to* DAVID. *They embrace in parting.* JONATHAN *and his soldiers go out.* DAVID *and* MICHAL *are silent, deeply moved.*

ACHISH

The light, the sign!
DAVID *takes the lantern and mounts the steps to the wall.*

MICHAL

The single lamp, swung once.
She raises her arm.
In the name of David!

DAVID *waves the lantern once and lets it fall with a crash into the square below.*

DAVID

In the name of Michal!

DARK CHANGE

END OF SCENE I

ACT V

SCENE II: CITY SQUARE AT DAWN. *Dead body of* SAPH *under the shadow of the wall.* ELIAB, ABINADAB, *and* SHAMMAH *enter,* R, *running.* ACHISH, *coming from* L, *meets them.*

ACHISH

Back to the eastern tower, ye dogs, cravens! *They huddle together, chattering in terror.* Back, ye feeble-hearted! ABINADAB *commences speaking, but is inarticulate through fright.* Has craven fear cut the tongues from your heads?

ELIAB

Oh, Achish, the eastern tower is doomed. We will not go back.

ACHISH

Will not! Ha, what is this you say?

ABINADAB

Since David fell, struck by the accursed arrow, a spell is on the tower. The men who stand

there are picked off like fruit from the tree. We cannot go back.

ACHISH

Cannot! A lie! Back, dogs!

SHAMMAH

Every arrow of the enemy brings down its prey. Since David fell there is no heart in us. We dare not!

ACHISH

The truth at last. Dare not! Is there not a man here to guard the eastern tower? Where is Saph, the fearless, the invincible?

ELIAB *pointing*

There he lies, Saph, fearless in death, invincible in death.

ACHISH

Slain! Saph, son of the Anakim! Take away the body of the dead, lest it strike cowards of us all. *They remove the body, exeunt by* L. Saph, son of Goliath, mighty one, thou who wast a bulwark in battle, hast been overthrown by a very little thing. David, too, the high-hearted, the songful, how art thou

silenced before this same arrow's prick, this small snake, winged and hissing. *The three brothers return,* L. *Enter from house,* MICHAL.

MICHAL

He cries for water.

ACHISH

Who?

MICHAL

David.

ACHISH

David! He lives!

MICHAL

He is Jehovah's anointed. He cannot die till that he come unto his own. But he begs for water from the well without the gate.

ELIAB

The well without the eastern tower!

MICHAL

The well of Gath below the eastern tower.

SHAMMAH

It is under the fiercest assault of the enemy.

ACHISH

By the moon of Astarte, is he mad? Does he not know that the battle rages and that it is death to venture below that wall, open to the arrows of Saul's bowmen?

MICHAL

He is wild with fever. How can he know? He is not himself and like a child he begs for water from the well without the gate. His blood is on fire.

ELIAB

I will go for the water.

ACHISH

You!

ABINADAB AND SHAMMAH

And I!

ACHISH

You that feared the eastern tower like the fires of Moloch!

SHAMMAH

We fear not now.

MICHAL

God be with you!

Exeunt, R, *the three.*

ACHISH

They were with fear palsied when I but spoke the name of that eastern tower. They were rooted to the ground with fear.

MICHAL *simply*

But this is for David.

ACHISH

The very name has power. *He mounts the steps to the wall and sounds of battle come from below.* Courage! We shall yet win the day, though it be a costly one. Courage!

Exit ACHISH, L, *by wall. Enter from house,* AMASA *and a Philistine, carrying* DAVID.

AMASA

Let him breathe the open air.

MICHAL *running to him*

A pillow, a pillow for his head!

They bring her silks and stuffs from the booth. She kneels by him.

David, my lover! Will he not speak?

AMASA

My captain! No, he cannot speak!

MICHAL

Ah, but he breathes, he lives, Amasa. He will live. He will live to be king over my people. Will he not live?

The two young men, deeply moved, turn away, walking to R.

David, look at me, hear me. I am Michal.

AMASA

He cannot hear.

MICHAL

This is the chain I have put upon you. Take it within your hand. It is a token of perfect understanding. *David raises a hand gropingly. She puts the chain between his fingers.* He hears. He understands. He looks at me with the seeing eye. *She buries her face upon his breast in tender joy.*

DAVID *faintly*

The flames creep over me. They consume me utterly. Water, water!

AMASA

He thirsts. What shall we bring him to drink?

DAVID

From the well of Gath, cold as snow-water from
Hermon, pure as the waters of Bethlehem.
Water, water!

MICHAL

They have gone to bring you water from the well.
DAVID *relapses to unconsciousness.*

AMASA

Who have gone?

MICHAL

His brothers.

AMASA

From the well of Gath?

MICHAL

The well below the eastern tower.

AMASA

It was in jeopardy of their lives.

MICHAL

But it was for David.

AMASA

We will go to hasten them, to help them.

MICHAL

Farewell.

Exeunt, R, AMASA *and the Philistine.*

DAVID *delirious*

I will call them and they will hear me. I will sing. My harp! *He gropes blindly, raising himself.* It is the dim and black night. I cannot find my harp. But they will hear my voice and they will know me. They will come into the fold. *He sings.*

The Lord my shepherd is,
I shall not want.
In the green pastures shall I lie
And walk beside still waters.
The Lord my soul restores,
He leadeth me
In paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

He sinks back exhausted. The noise of battle is heard.

MICHAL

Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician here, to heal the wound of my beloved, for his wound is grievous?

DAVID

Jehovah thunders on Lebanon. The brooks of Kedron war among their water-courses. My sheep are lost on the mountains and they will not find their resting-place.

Fragmentary memories of his life come to him, the happiness of his return from war to Gibeah, the song before SAUL, *the javelin-throwing, the parting in the Cave of Adullam.*

There is another song, but I have forgotten it. *He sings hesitatingly.*

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble;
Therefore I will not fear——

He cries out as if in great terror.

I am wounded, struck to the heart! O my lord king!

MICHAL

in an agony of sympathy

Fear not, David my captain. My right hand is under your head and my left hand supports you. David, it is I.

DAVID *delirious*

This day shall you choose between a king's crown and Michal. I charge you, O Michal, to re-

member my love. Many—waters—cannot —quench—love, neither can the—floods—drown—it. She has forgotten.

MICHAL

David, my lover, I remember and I understand.

DAVID

She is far from me. Her thoughts are not my thoughts nor are her ways my ways.

MICHAL *pleadingly*

I have not forgotten. I remember and understand.

DAVID

Many waters cannot quench love. But—she—has—forgotten.

He sings, falling asleep.

There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the City of God,

The dwelling place——

MICHAL, *rising gently, looks at him.*

MICHAL

He sleeps. The Lord gives his beloved sleep.

Enter, 2 E L, EGLAH *and six Philistine women, in yellow and garlanded. They bear burning censers*

for the worship of Astarte and a golden image of the goddess. They swing their censers and commence chanting.

WOMEN

Glory! Glory!

MICHAL

stepping forward with a finger to her lips

Peace, peace, I entreat you. He sleeps.

EGLAH

What is that to us?

WOMEN

Astarte, hear us!

MICHAL

Peace! Is your heart a stone? If you must sing and chant, sing lowly for he sleeps and sleep is life.

WOMEN *very softly*

Hear us, hear us, Queen of Heaven,
Astarte, hear our prayer.
Glory, glory, great is Astarte!

MICHAL *directs them with arm outstretched like a choral leader.*

MICHAL

Softly, softly! *The women, still chanting softly, go within,* L. Queen of Heaven! She hath been cut out of the forest with an axe and gilded with fine gold in the furnace.

Enter, R, *the three brothers with a water-skin of water.* MICHAL *meets them in silence. One of them brings her a goblet from the booth. Water is poured into it and* MICHAL *goes to* DAVID. AMASA *appears from* L *on the wall.*

AMASA

The army of the enemy flee. They turn them like locusts before the fiery whirlwind.

DAVID *arouses.*

MICHAL

holding the goblet to him

Water from the well of Gath.

DAVID

taking the goblet wonderingly

Water!

MICHAL

You prayed most earnestly for water from the well without the gate.

DAVID

A darkness has been upon my lids, but now it is day! Water from the well!

MICHAL

Your brothers brought it to you. Drink!

DAVID *looks long at his three brothers standing near.*

ELIAB

Drink!

DAVID

pouring out the water slowly

Far be it from me that I should drink this cup! Let it be as an offering to heaven in memory of this day and in gratitude for the day's mercies. Is it not the blood of these men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Lo, my thirst is quenched. *He rises.* Watchman, what of the night?

AMASA

The night is over and past. The day dawns.

DAVID

How goes the battle?

MICHAL *by his side*

Have a care for your wound.

DAVID

I am healed and strong.

AMASA

Behold a herald comes running. He comes apace. He is near.

DAVID

Are there tidings in his mouth?

MICHAL

What does he say?

A silence while AMASA *listens.*

AMASA

The general of the host of Israel has fallen. Abner has fallen.

DAVID

Tremble not, Michal. Jehovah will be merciful.

AMASA

Lo, another. He runs apace. He draws near.

DAVID

Another has fallen, one of the mighty. Ask him, Amasa, is Saul the king, safe, and Jonathan, his son?

MICHAL

What says the second messenger? Speak.

AMASA

Tidings, my lord David. For you are avenged this day of all that rose up against you to do you hurt.

DAVID

They have not fallen in battle, Saul my king, and Jonathan, his son?

MICHAL

Speak!

AMASA

The enemies of my lord David and all that rise up against you to do you hurt be as they are this day!

DAVID *in silence bows his head.* MICHAL *cries out.*

MICHAL

Alas, my father, my brother!

DAVID

Jonathan, my friend, my brother, would God I had died for you, my brother, my friend!

Enter, L *and* R, ACHISH *and Philistines,* DAVID'S

followers and lastly DOEG, *carrying* SAUL'S *crown and bracelet.*

ACHISH

David, king of Israel, we salute you!

ALL

David, David, king!

Enter, from the house, the Hebrew women.

HEBREW WOMEN

David of Bethlehem! All hail!

MICHAL

Alas, my father, my brother!

DOEG

David, king of Israel, I salute you!

DAVID *in stern anger*

You also!

DOEG

My lord, when I learned the words of the prophet concerning you, I repented me of my blindness. Will it please you to pardon mine offences and accept at my hand these tokens of your sovereignty?

DOEG *advances with the crown.*

DAVID

with repellent hand outstretched

How know you that Saul and Jonathan are dead?
How went the matter? I pray you, tell me!

DOEG

As I happened by chance upon a certain spot in yonder plain, Saul leaned upon his spear and lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard upon him.

MICHAL

Alas, my father!

DOEG

He saw me and called unto me and I said: "Here am I." He said unto me: "Stand, I pray you, upon me, and slay me, for anguish is come upon me." So I stood upon him and slew him.

MICHAL

You!

DOEG

Because I was sure that he could not live after he was fallen in battle. And I took the crown and the bracelet that he wore on his arm——

MICHAL

approaching DOEG *with impetuous scorn*

You! Give them here. You are not worthy even to hold them.

She takes them from DOEG.

DAVID

who has been listening with stony self-restraint

How were you not afraid to stretch forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? *He smites* DOEG *down. Solemnly.* Carry him forth from this place. DOEG'S *body is taken up.* His blood be upon his head, for his mouth has testified against him, saying, "I have slain the Lord's anointed."

Exeunt men with DOEG'S *body.*

MICHAL

approaching DAVID *with the crown*

Your crown, O David, King of Israel!

DAVID *regards* MICHAL *in silence and unseeingly while all watch him in reverent awe. A visionary expression comes to his face and he lifts his arms in poetic exaltation of grief.*

DAVID

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places;
How are the mighty fallen!

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the
battle!
Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of
Askelon.
Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew,
Neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of
offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast
away.
The shield of Saul.
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the
mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in
their lives,
And in their death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet with other delights,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the
battle!

O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.
I am grieved for you, my brother Jonathan!
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me,
Thy love to me was wonderful.

How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!
The first rays of the rising sun illumine DAVID'S *face.* MICHAL *holds the crown before him.*

MICHAL

Your crown, O David, King of Israel!

ALL

All hail, David, King!
DAVID *raises his hand in a gesture of silence.*

DAVID *after a pause*

Michal, my queen!
He takes the crown and holds it above the bowed head of MICHAL.

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY

MARY MAGDALEN

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE: The House of Mary.

"The Desire of the Eyes."

ACT TWO

SCENE: The Pool of Bethesda. (Same Evening.)

"The Vexing of the Waters."

ACT THREE

SCENE: The House of Mary. (Next Evening.)

"If any man will come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

ACT FOUR

(Two months elapse.)

SCENE I: The House of the Wool-dyer.

SCENE II: The Porch of the Temple.

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much."

PERSONS

MARY MAGDALEN
ZILLAH
AZUBAH
PHILIP THE TETRARCH
ELON
ITHOMAR
RACHEL
JOANNA
DEBORAH
CLEO
SHUBAB
BARUCH
SIMEON
JUDE
DATHAN

Servants, Soldiers, Men and Women.

ACT I

SCENE: *A luxurious apartment in* MARY'S *house. Musicians in a small balcony with Syrian instruments, harp, cymbal, tambourine. 2 exits* L, *respectively to the supper room and other rooms and to* MARY'S *chamber.* R E *to the street. Wide latticed window,* C. *Small table set with wine and fruits. Draped alcove between columns toward which attention is directed.*

TIME—*Afternoon.*

DISCOVERED—PHILIP, *the tetrarch, a pale peevish man, proud of his station and descent.* ELON, *a degenerate Jew, his sycophant creature, conspicuous for two teeth like tusks, beady eyes and a yellow scarf.* ZILLAH, *friend of* MARY, *a morose beauty.* AZUBAH, *friend of* MARY, *a tender girl of childish mien. Others, women of doubtful gayety and men of arrogant bearing. All tend toward the curtained alcove,* PHILIP *and* AZUBAH *leading.*

PHILIP *turning to* AZUBAH

Where is this marble wonder of a woman?

ELON

crowding to the alcove

Was he a lover, too, the long-limbed Greek
Who sculptured her?

ZILLAH

with a veiled sneer

A friend platonic he,
Set to the tune of poem and cyclic dance.

AZUBAH

holding aside the curtain

Is it not exquisite as breath of spring?
That step like wind among the river grasses,
That brow like morning on the top of Hermon!
PHILIP, *entranced, cannot speak.*

ELON

A woman, you waste praises on a woman.

AZUBAH

Because I am a woman I praise Mary.

PHILIP *confusedly*

The marble bosom and the lips of snow,
This is not our sweet Syrian Aphrodite,
The glowing-limbed, wild-tressèd Bacchanal.

ELON

Fresh as the Paphian from her bath of foam!

PHILIP *angrily*

Elon, I have not bid you whine for me,
You lap-eared puppy of a puling people!

AZUBAH *smilingly*

Nay, be at peace!

PHILIP *as to a child*

Slip of a Jewish girl,
Would you fain try your strength with Philip tetrarch
Of wide-spread Auranitis, Ituræa,
Of Batanæa and of Trachinitis?

Enter MARY, L C, *followed by* SHUBAB, *a half-nude Ethiopian lad, clad in garlands and fantastic draperies. All turn expectantly to her. Some lingering sounds of the snarl from* PHILIP.

MARY *with breezy scorn*

How blithesomely you pass the time together,
Like jealous courtiers when the king is gone!

PHILIP *leading her to a chair*

The empress gone!

MARY

mimicking them in turn

Brave Elon black as thunder,
Little Azubah plucking at proud Rome,
A dove before a hawk—Shubab, fill up!
SHUBAB *pours wine and passes it.*
Friends, let us eat and drink and all make merry,
For on the morrow—what man knows the morrow?

ELON *in his shallow voice*

To-morrow we shall live and still make merry.

AZUBAH

with wistful prevision of trouble

Who knows the fruit to-morrow's tree puts forth?

PHILIP

reclining by MARY, *as the wine is passed him*

I need no wine to flame along my blood,
Mary, when you are nigh.

MARY

Give me the beaker.

Silence from all.
I drink to—those I love.

PHILIP

To Philip, then!

MARY *looking far off*

I drink this cup to one who shines afar.
She drinks.
Exclamations of wonder from all.

PHILIP

He is no lover if he comes not to you.
MARY, *leaning her elbow on the cushions, seems lost in thought.*

ELON *to* ZILLAH

I wonder who he is.

ZILLAH

I know the man;
'Tis Ithomar, the son of Ithrael.

MARY

So! Out upon you, voluble blabbing girl,
With your "I know, I know," that nothing know.
Your eyes have never looked on Ithomar.

AZUBAH *peacemaker again*

When I was in my mother's house a child——
She hesitates.

ELON *eagerly*

Go on.
All listen.

AZUBAH

This Ithomar was neighbor to us,
The prettiest lad through all the country-side.

MARY

with assumed carelessness

They say his beauty is transcendent still,
Like one of those fair fabled gods the Greek
Has sung me of upon his barbarous lyre.
Again she goes into rapt thought.

PHILIP

to depreciate ITHOMAR

I have heard he calls himself a patriot,
This Jewish fellow, in your Sanhedrin,
And crassly fools your scribes and Pharisees
With foolish dreams of civic independence.

ELON

like a gossiping old woman. All gather round him to listen

He has ranged through land and sea, this Ithomar;
He has a vase of alabaster, carved
With cunning workmanship of flower and leaf
And human countenances interwrought.

ZILLAH

They say he keeps it in a secret shrine
And worships it in place of love or wine.

MARY *rises, goes to the group, interrupting imperiously.*

MARY

This vase of alabaster shall be ours.
Hark ye, 'twill be the ransom of my favor,
Poised like a trophy on that pedestal.

ALL

The statue then?

MARY

What care I for the statue,
When I have won the mystic, worshipful,
Strange, alabaster vase of Ithomar,
Symbol and pledge of utter vanquishment
Before the banners of resplendent love.
Listen, my friends, I bid you to a feast,
When three more suns have risen and wheeled and set,
I bid you to the triumph of the vase.

ZILLAH *to* ELON

Her heart is fixed on snaring Ithomar;
She hath asked him many a time——

MARY

What babble you?

ZILLAH

I spoke——

MARY

If babble may be speech—you spoke,
And this is what under your breath you spoke,
(I do not fear to cry it out aloud)
That I have bidden to me Ithomar.
I drink again to Ithomar—our guest—
To Ithomar, philosopher and—man.
She drinks and with her all but PHILIP

PHILIP *sneeringly*

'Tis well; but not philosopher and lover,
For he who loves does not philosophize.

ZILLAH *to* ELON

He never looks on women; he will not come.

MARY

What babble you again? He will not come?
He never looks on women? Still, forsooth,
To women he may be blind and not to me.
I am not one in many, in the mob——

PHILIP

One out of many, one supremely set;
Drinking.
To Mary, burning goddess of the east!

MARY

I have learned that Bacchic dance you pictured me,
That mad Ionians dance beneath the moon
To their Astarte-goddess.

PHILIP

Aphrodite?

MARY

It matters not. The sculptor was my master.

PHILIP

The long-limbed fellow!

ALL

Dance, show us the dance!

MARY

She frees herself of scarfs and draperies. To the musicians:
The music should breathe tenderly at first
As that faint little fluttering breeze of dawn

That wakes the birds and shakes the olive buds;
Afterward, like slow swelling of the storm
When white with anger gleams the horizon edge,
Till all the world keeps furious carnival
And witch winds ride atop the tossing hills.
She dances, slowly at first, then more madly with the crescendo of music. During the second movement comes a knock at the door. She stops abruptly.
Who knocks?

ZILLAH

Perhaps your Ithomar, philosopher.
A knock. All lean expectantly to the door

MARY

Who knocks? Go, Shubab, to the door.
SHUBAB *opens the door. Enter* DEBORAH, *an aged woman with cavernous eyes, her figure and voice shaken by palsy.*
There is a start of surprise and a movement backward from her.

DEBORAH

in hollow shaken tones

Servant of Ithomar the patriot,
Unwilling to the House of Shame I come.

She sees her daughter AZUBAH, *and her voice breaks.* AZUBAH *shrinks farthest of all from her.*
Azubah!

AZUBAH
shrinking to MARY'S *side*

Mother!
To MARY.
Save me, save me from her.

MARY

That parchment piece, written upon by horror!
She hath often cursed me when I walked abroad;
How may this ancient and misshapen tree,
Azubah, put forth such a flower as thou
And serve that son of beauty, Ithomar?

DEBORAH

I bear a message for him.

MARY *running to her*

Happy woman!
Good dame, you are an angel messenger;
Dear crone, will he come hither to my house?

DEBORAH *drawing away*

Nay, touch me not, accursed loveliness!
The word I bear is for, not from my master;
One told me he had passed within your gate.

MARY

Then out upon you, out, gray spectre-thing,
You gaunt and shaken evil-omening thing.

DEBORAH *her voice rising*

Yea, verily, I will out with full content
When I have called the curse of heaven upon you.
Harlot, your fingers are the touch of death,
Harlot, your feet the highway unto hell.
What if I was the old misshapen tree,
I bore one flower, now I am desolate;
You have reft me of my sole, my cherished flower,
You have sown its petals in the miry streets
Where men may trample it. Azubah child,
My child! Nay, never any more at all
My child that was, but lost irreparably!

AZUBAH

I am afraid!

As DEBORAH *raises her trembling finger in cursing* MARY *draws* AZUBAH *to her.*

MARY

Not her! Ah, curse not her!

DEBORAH

Both you and her and her and you again.
Cursed thou shalt be when thou comest in

And when thou goest out, accursed be;
In hunger and in thirst, in nakedness,
In want of all things shalt thou eat the dust,
A proverb and a byword and a sign:
With madness, blindness, violent vexation,
With burning and astonishment of heart,
The sword of vengeance of Jehovah smite thee!
Exit DEBORAH. AZUBAH *faints in* MARY'S *arms.*

MARY

Look, the poor soul, she faints within my arms.
The men lay her on a couch. She opens her eyes and raises herself.

AZUBAH

The room went reeling. Pardon ye my weakness.

MARY

Now let us drown the horror of that voice,
Obliterate the vision of that presence.
Musicians, play; harp, cymbal, tambourine.

PHILIP

Pouring wine as the music begins and people move about. All drink and laugh hysterically.
You, too, are pale beyond your wont. Drink this;
It is Falernian, rich with Italy.

MARY *takes the goblet.*
Do you not taste the purple of Campagna?
MARY *sips and dashes the goblet down so that it breaks.*

MARY

I taste—a voice of blighting and of vengeance;
I taste—of trembling and of desolation.
Why do you stand and stare like images
Of stony-eyed Egyptians on their tombs?
Dance and forget!
AZUBAH *rouses herself to join in the dance with* ELON.
All dance

MARY *stopping*

I heard a sound, a knock.
All stop.
Shubab, the door.
He goes to the door.
No living soul is there?
It was the blood that knocked against my heart.
They dance again. She keeps looking at the statue.

PHILIP

What see you there between the marble columns?

MARY

pointing to the statue

It follows me with that still moonlight smile,
Like one who hugs a terrible calm knowledge.
She goes to the statue impulsively as if to cast it down. PHILIP *and* ELON *restrain her.*
I will grind the graven image into powder;
Who says *It* is my image? *It* is death,
Blind death, the pitiful and pitiless.

AZUBAH

I have seen her once before in mood like this.
There, Zillah, let us draw the Tyrian curtain.
They draw the curtain, concealing the statue in its niche.

MARY

to PHILIP, *her mood swiftly changing*

What splendid height, O Philip, son of Herod,
Like some tall savage sentinel, elect
To guard all night a dead king's towering tomb.
She measures her height with his.
Where do I come against this noble bulwark?

PHILIP *embracing her*

Unto my heart.

MARY

'Twas gallantly conceived;
A gallant lie, as praise is wont to be.
Taking AZUBAH*'s hand and drawing her to* PHILIP.
Little Azubah stands beneath your arm,
A Syrian dove within the eagle's wing—
A knock.
Now will your gallant lie become half truth—
AZUBAH *looks fondly upon* PHILIP. *The knock is repeated. Calmly:*
Shubab, some message.
To PHILIP:
Do not frown upon her!

PHILIP *with self-conceit*

I swear she loves me better for the frown.
SHUBAB *ushers* ITHOMAR *into the room.* ITHOMAR *is a man of singular beauty, with an air of deep thought and aloofness. He is followed by his servant, who removes* ITHOMAR'S *sandals and hands them to* SHUBAB. *Exit, with low obeisance, servant.*

SHUBAB

'Tis Ithomar, the son of Ithrael!

MARY

My welcome to you, son of Ithrael!

ITHOMAR

Is this the house of Mary?

MARY

Even so;
I am that Mary called of Magdala.
Have you not seen me on the streets abroad,
For far and wide I am known in Cesarea?
Behold these gems that glitter on my arms,
And on my brow, thick clustered like a crown.
There is no other woman save a queen
Who shines like me.

ITHOMAR

I walk with downcast eyes,
My mistress is pure-lipped Philosophy.

MARY *laughing*

The pity of it! These my guests do greet you:
The noble Philip, tetrarch, governor.
Azubah, Zillah, Elon, all your slaves.
All salute him.

ITHOMAR *bowing*

You do me honor.

MARY *seats herself and motions him to sit beside her. He sits at the other end of the divan. The guests move away in merry groups.*

MARY

What, so far from me?
I am not to be feared.

ITHOMAR

I fear all women.

MARY

But I am not as other women are.
She laughs.
O you philosophers, who search for truth
As women sweep the dust up from the floor,
Gathering into one vessel tags and frays
Of earth's diverse material, saying: "Dust!"

ITHOMAR

It is a woman's quaint comparison,
Philosophers and sweepers with their brooms!

MARY

So do you sweep a hundred women up
Into the potter's vessel of some preconceived
Shape in your mind, pronouncing, "This is Woman!"

ITHOMAR

Nay, I have never known a hundred women.

MARY

If you had said, "I fear not other women,
But you I fear, O Mary!" . . . See that girl!
Her head turned sideways like a prying sparrow!
She wonders at the theme of our discourse,
She is the placid ox-like kind of woman.

ITHOMAR

I like a silent woman.

MARY

You shall have her.

Silence between them, while in another part of the room PHILIP *and* ELON *confidentially converse.*

PHILIP

This most objectionable Ithomar,
This human mildew on our rosy fruit,
Requires the medicine of a pruning knife;
They say he is a fiery patriot,
Inflames the Sanhedrin to mutiny——

ELON

A casual mischance is easier
Than cumbersome intrigue of polity;
A scuffle, a street affray, removes a man;
The blame uncertain——

PHILIP

And your point most clear.
I send two fellows primed with certain sneers;
At a certain place they meet a certain man—
Some fine Rabbinical dispute ensues,
Waxing more gross with argument of fists
Until a fray is ripe; a passer-by
—It might be Elon—claps to bring the guard;
A certain most objectionable man
Is haled to prison without more ado.

ELON

But Ithomar is much reputed here.

PHILIP

Incendiary patriot!

ELON

It is true.

PHILIP

His friends in friendliness will raise no cry
For fear of worse if Cæsar is aroused
To knowledge of him. Then we understand?

MARY *rising*

In such a chattering crowd of noisy sparrows
There is not peace for thoughts to pass between.
Zillah, Azubah, lead our friends to supper.

AZUBAH

Will you not come?

MARY

We join you presently.

ZILLAH *with biting raillery*

Pray you, be merciful to Ithomar;
Bread is the best boon to a hungry man.

PHILIP *sneeringly*

But Ithomar is a philosopher.

Exeunt all, 1 E L.

MARY

Now you shall have your silent, ox-like woman,
The big-eyed, sluggish, sleepy-lidded creature.
You doubt it? I could sit for hours, I swear,
Upon this cushion with my feet crossed so,
My hands like this, folded upon my lap,
As dumb-lipped as the golden cherubim.
Do you not like it?

ITHOMAR

What?

MARY

The silent woman.

ITHOMAR

You have not shown me yet.

MARY

Now I begin.

A minute or two of silence during which ITHOMAR *sits looking toward* MARY *but absorbed in thought.* MARY *crosses and uncrosses her feet. A burst of laughter from the other room.* ZILLAH *and* ELON *come to the door.*

ZILLAH *to* ELON

They sit like stones.

To MARY:

What, still so far from him?

Exeunt and a burst of laughter following their return to the other room. ITHOMAR *rises and walks to the* R E.

MARY

rising and following

You are not leaving—leaving me—alone?
I have—I have—(my heart crowds fast my utterance)
I have a thousand themes of converse with you—
And yet I liked you, wrapped in silence there,
A prophet's robe, invisible, austere.
I liked you, Ithomar. . . . What did you say?

ITHOMAR

I did not speak.

MARY

I thought I heard you say
You liked me in my marble-smiling silence.
They tell me I am sculptured in such lines
As those god-women of the gentile Greeks.
I thought I heard you say you liked my speech
Even better than my marble-smiling silence.
Confess, did not your heart say this?

ITHOMAR

No, Mary.
I have no heart for you or—other women.
Farewell.

MARY

I will not brook it, Ithomar.
You are a lover of the beautiful.
Behind that Tyrian stuff there is a block
Of marble, sculptured to a certain shape
Your eyes would fain behold.
He goes to it.
Patience awhile.
You would not be the schoolboy at the feast,
Snatching his fig or cake, off like an arrow.
Why did you come if you must straightway go?

ITHOMAR

I came—to pass away an idle hour;
I came—to leave you and philosophize;
I come and—go, a sage philosopher.

MARY

You came, you shall not go philosopher.
A snatch of voices and laughter from the other room.
Hark, here is love and laughter, song and wine,
And woman, woman suing at your feet.
Are you not moved by woman, Ithomar?

ITHOMAR

Once I was moved by woman, long ago;
'Twas long ago.

MARY

You have a carven vase
Worshipped, I vow, for some sweet woman's sake.
During the speech of MARY'S, ITHOMAR *advances to the niche and finally is about to draw the curtains when she restrains him.*

ITHOMAR

What do you mean?

MARY

That alabaster vase
Housed in a shrine apart. Bring it to me

And I will give you breathing living beauty.
Were not a woman better than a stone?
The vase would crown that statue's pedestal—
(Patience awhile and I will draw the veil)
And you would set some girl within your shrine.

ITHOMAR

Smiling, to draw her on, wondering, half-guessing her meaning.
What girl?

MARY

Azubah, Zillah, many a woman,
Would worship even the ground on which you walk
For the brief guerdon of your smile or kiss.

ITHOMAR

withstanding her allurement
I know not how to kiss.

MARY

Let me be teacher;
Taste of my lips and you will soon forget
The barren bosom of philosophy. . .
Sudden veer of tone.
You madden me with that far gaze of yours.

You look at me as through an open gate,
Seeing beyond a vision shut from me.
You madden me with that pale cheek of yours.
Why have you come to vex my peace of mind?

ITHOMAR

Why have you bid me come?
A pause during which several purposes in turn are reflected on her face.

MARY

Because—I love you.

ITHOMAR

You love me! What a honey-trap you set
To snare our rainbow boylets on the wing;
I am no long-billed humming-bird like Elon.
Do women such as you know how to love?

MARY

Oft have I marked you in our Cesarea,
With that uplifted solitary mien,
Like one of those great prophets of our race,
Wild Hosea or flaming Jeremiah.
Oft have I marked you, saying in mine heart,
"Bow down, O Mary, to your chosen lord."
Master, be merciful unto your own.

ITHOMAR

Remain one moment in that perfect poise.
Now lift your head and look at me—like that.
Men speak the truth that you are beautiful.

MARY

If I am beautiful to you, enough.

ITHOMAR

advancing to the concealed statue

You have enchanted me to stay too long;
Before we part, show me your sculptured image,
For sculpture pleases my philosophy;
Beauty remote and pale and visionary,
Conceits of handicraft, dreams of the mind,
Images all, people my soul's demesne;
I have done long since with sharp reality.
Before we part show me your sculptured image,
Thus you may live in marble memory.

MARY *with fierce scorn*

May live in marble memory, Ithomar,
When I would live and breathe within your arms!
Are you a stone in semblance of a man?

ITHOMAR

bantering gracefully

Show me the sculptured image and mayhap
Its pictured loveliness may melt the stone.
Then seriously:
I have made a vow which must not be for-
sworn;
I keep a tryst to-night.

MARY

in disbelief, then with many varying emotions

A tryst you keep!
Who is this other woman, you that plead
You never look on woman, who is she?
Is she a student of "philosophy,"
Scowling on parchment scrolls and cryptic speech?
Oh, I can fancy her with eyebrows bent
And thin lips drawn; or is she some young girl,
A folded bud of virtue with shy lids
Drooping upon her baby damask cheek?
Has she deep eyes that melt into your own
And arms that cling like this, like this, my lord?
Hush, I will show to you the sculptured image:
Behold it and then say, "I keep a tryst,
A tryst to-night with Mary Magdalen."
She draws the curtain and shows the statue. ITHO-

MAR, *regarding it in silence, seems deeply moved, turns away.*

ITHOMAR

with strange earnestness

I see another woman sculptured here.
God of my race, it is beyond belief!
The well-remembered posture of the hand,
The blithesome brow, the soft elusive smile—
Oh, that lost springtime in the isle of Rhodes!

MARY

Whose likeness do you see?

ITHOMAR

Sacred her name.

MARY

It is that other woman, I know, I know!
Enter softly and smoothly the servant of ITHOMAR, *a bland and dutiful creature.*

SERVANT

My master!
Both turn.
Ithomar, the hour draws nigh.

ITHOMAR

Where is the appointed place?

SERVANT

Bethesda's pool.

ITHOMAR

I will make haste.
To MARY:
Farewell.
He turns to go.

MARY

You shall not go!
One moment stay, my master and my lord!
Exit ITHOMAR. *To the servant:*
Whom has he gone to meet, your Ithomar?
Mary of Magdala, I, command you speak!

SERVANT *blandly*

The business of the servant is to serve.
My master comes and goes and says his say;
I, having eyes, see not, and having ears,
Hear not, and having lips, am dumb.
The business of the servant is to serve.
Exit Servant, R, *with elaborate bow.*

MARY

after a moment's pause

I will after him and wrest the secret from him.
Exit MARY, R, *and enter* PHILIP *and* ELON, *drunk and excited, from* L.

PHILIP

She's mine, she's mine.

ELON

Nay, I have bought her from you.

PHILIP

You drunken fool, she's mine.

ELON

Mary is yours,
Worth a whole netful of these lesser minnows.

PHILIP

I'll have them all.

ELON

Azubah shall be mine.

PHILIP

We'll play at dice for her.

ELON

approaching, with PHILIP, *to the table*

So be it, then.

They shake the cups.

PHILIP

I first!

He throws.

The furies take it.

ELON *throwing*

Luck be mine!
The unlucky throw again. A tie.

PHILIP

Once more.
His throw turns up the highest number.
It's Aphrodite!

ELON

after this, his second throw

Pssh, I get the dog!

PHILIP

She's mine, by Aphrodite!
AZUBAH *appears at* L.

AZUBAH *lightly*

Wrangling still?
What sly design are you two scheming at?

PHILIP

Congratulate me. I have won at dice.
Exeunt L. *Enter,* R, MARY.

MARY

His soul's desire! Beside Bethesda's pool!
His soul's desire, the woman of the statue!

The spirit Zaxus hid within the statue!
It was not I, *It* was a stranger soul;
It mocked me with a semblance of myself;
Even while I danced *It* followed, mocking me
With that strange moonlight smile I never wore.
She approaches the statue, hurling fiercely words at it.
At last I see my look fade utterly
From out your face; a naked lie you stand,
Tricking him with some charm of memory,
Luring him from me with that moonlight smile.
I hate you, hate you, hate you, other woman!
As she enters the alcove she pulls the curtain behind her so that she remains unseen while her voice is heard.
Do you deem that you shall trample out my life,
Moveless and wordless marble necromancer?
Lie there and there and there! Lie in the dust!
The crash of the statue is heard. All rush in from the other room.

ZILLAH

I heard a crash.

ELON

Something has fallen.

AZUBAH

Drawing the curtain.

Ah look!

MARY *is shown, kneeling, with her head on the pedestal, the statue in fragments about her.*

PHILIP *trying to raise her*

What foul mischance befell the marble statue?
Small wonder that she grieves the broken statue.

ZILLAH *acridly*

What ample room for vase of Ithomar!

MARY

You speak the truth.
To all.
Forget not ye of my feast!

ALL

The feast, the feast, the triumph of the vase.

MARY

Bring me my veil, my cloak, Azubah girl.
She goes to the table and pours herself a cup of wine.
Drink to the road! This night I make a journey.
She lifts the cup.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE: *The pool of Bethesda in a bleak and desolate country without the wall. Stone steps lead down to the water's edge.*

Late afternoon.

DISCOVERED—*A group of maimed and impotent folk gathered about the pool, waiting for the troubling of the waters. Among them are* DEBORAH, *the palsied woman;* SIMEON, *a blind man;* BARUCH, *a humpback;* JOANNA, *a placid middle-aged woman; and* RACHEL, *a wistful child.*

SIMEON

There's a burning in my eyes, as if a thousand little ants were eating them. I half believe it's ants that trouble them. When the blindness first swam over me—it was on the threshing-floor of Naaman the son of——

JOANNA

Peace, Simeon, we have heard the story a hundred times.

BARUCH

Joanna, you are a comfortable body to stop poor Simeon's mouth.

JOANNA

It is not only folks as looks puny and wears bunches that has the right to claim sickness. I am taken many a time with dizzy spells so that I like to fall on the floor, all a-heap. It's the dyestuffs I am always working in that go to the head of me.

DEBORAH

Little Rachel, you are silent, what is your plaint?

RACHEL

I have no plaint. I am only waiting for the spirit to come and vex the water, and then we shall all be well.

SIMEON

Who is speaking? It sounds like a child's voice. Who are you?

RACHEL

I am Rachel.

SIMEON

Why are you here with us old impotent folk? Come here and let me put my hand upon

your head. You are a child. You ought to be running and dancing.

RACHEL

But I am lame, I cannot come to you. I don't know how to run and dance.

JOANNA

She is my sister's child. She speaks the truth.

SIMEON

Poor lamb, I am sorry for you. I would give you my sound legs.

RACHEL

I would give you my good eyes and then you could see. It is sad to be blind.

BARUCH

Look, look, there's a ripple in the pool where all was still.

DEBORAH

The Spirit!

All clamber down to the lowest step ready to dip their feet. RACHEL, *forgotten, is left behind.*

RACHEL

I am left alone.

BARUCH

Be very still.

DEBORAH

Watch! Listen!

JOANNA

It is nothing, Baruch. The Spirit has gone again.
All climb back to their original places.

SIMEON

Where is Rachel?

RACHEL

I am here. I have not stirred.

JOANNA

We all forgot you.

RACHEL

Simeon, how can you see so well to get down to the water's edge when you are blind?

SIMEON

Child, I have travelled this path for twice your years.

RACHEL

And all that time the Spirit did not come! Alas!

SIMEON

Yes, the Spirit came, but on those days when I kept the house.

BARUCH

That's always the way of life. Stay at home and everything happens abroad. Go out, and no good thing comes near you.

SIMEON

I hear some one walking.

JOANNA

There's no one by but us.

SIMEON

I hear some one walking.

RACHEL

I see her, a very beautiful lady.

Enter, R, MARY.

JOANNA

Now she will purse her mouth and now she will draw up her fine raiment——

BARUCH

And pass on the other side of the street.

RACHEL

She is standing still.

MARY

Is this the pool of Bethesda?

JOANNA

It is the pool of Bethesda.

MARY

Who are ye?

Silence.

BARUCH *to* JOANNA

Answer her.

JOANNA

She says: "Who are we?"

SIMEON

Who *are* we?

JOANNA *to* MARY

We are what you see with your eyes.

RACHEL

We are poor impotent folk, the halt and withered and blind.

MARY

What do ye here?

Silence.

BARUCH *to* JOANNA

Answer her.

JOANNA

She says: "What do we here?"

SIMEON

What *do* we here?

DEBORAH

not having looked at MARY

Why does she want to know?

MARY

What do ye here?

JOANNA

We do what you see with your eyes.

RACHEL

We are waiting for the troubling of the waters,
when we shall go down into the pool and be
healed of all our sickness.

JOANNA

The Spirit, the Spirit!

All watch intently in attitudes of readiness.

DEBORAH

It came—and went again. There was something
troubled it

SIMEON

Who is that strange woman, Joanna?

JOANNA *to* MARY

Yes, who are you?

DEBORAH *turns for the first time to look at* MARY.

DEBORAH

Who are you with your bracelets and your wimples,
Your purple and your scarlet and fine linen?
I know you, you embroidered harlotry;
'Tis you have vexed the Spirit of the pool,
You have vexed him with the perfume of your feet,
The delicate odor of your abomination.

JOANNA

Who is she?

BARUCH

Who is she?

SIMEON

How still she stands!

DEBORAH

She is that Mary, called of Magdala.
She has driven away salvation from Bethesda.

BARUCH

Leave us alone, O Mary Magdalen.

JOANNA

I pray you, quickly go!

SIMEON

How still she stands!

ALL

Go, go, accursed woman, Magdalen.

MARY

How dare you, maimed and halt and impotent folk,
How dare you vent such insolence on me?
Withered old women, humps of hideous men,
Knotted and gnarled and crouched like stumps or stones!
I would pity you if you were fit for pity;
What right have you to strow the public way,
Blotching it with your ragged shreds of bodies?
Here, take the gold I throw you and begone.
She scatters gold to them.

ALL

Nay, touch us not! Keep off, for you are evil.
They scatter to go, all but RACHEL

JOANNA

We will not touch her gold, for it is evil.

SIMEON

Lead me away from her, for she is evil.
Exeunt all. RACHEL *puts out her hands, crying after them.*

MARY

Why do you cry here, trembling like a leaf,

With that sheet face of yours and those bright eyes?

RACHEL

I am afraid because they called you evil.

MARY

Up, then, and run, you little peaked thing!
Run from the evil enchantment of my eyes.
She approaches RACHEL *with vehement gesture.*

RACHEL *pleadingly*

Lady, I cannot run.

MARY

You cannot run?

RACHEL

I can just walk—like this. It hurts me, lady,
For I am lame.

MARY

Poor little frightened one!
I am sorry, I am very sorry for you;
Will you forgive me?

RACHEL

Yes, but do not touch me.

MARY

You fear me?

RACHEL

For they said that you were evil.

MARY

They shuddered at me, all those halt and blind.
Am I abominable in *your* eyes?

RACHEL

Lady, I think that you are like an angel.

MARY

Dear Rachel! But my soul is sick within.

RACHEL

Here let us wait together by the pool
And when the Spirit comes we shall be cured.

MARY

Long have you waited by Bethesda's pool?

RACHEL

I have waited long, but when the cry goes up
They all step down before me to the waters
In eager haste and Rachel is forgotten.

MARY *lifting her*

I will carry you, dear child, within my arms;
You shall not be forgotten any more.
What a little weight you are within my arms!

She puts her down.
It were a blessed pool to cure your body.
Ah me!

RACHEL

Why are you sad?

MARY

I, too, am sick.
Would that there were some waters of Bethesda
To wash away the anguish of the soul!

RACHEL

There is a Stranger here in Cesarea
Who cures men's souls, I heard Joanna say.
He has a face that shineth like a star
And little children love to follow Him—
You are not listening!

MARY

No, I cannot listen
To childish babble when my heart is faint.
Rachel, do you know one named Ithomar?

RACHEL

Ithomar, ever smiling with sad eyes!
I know him.

MARY

Have you seen him here this eve?

RACHEL

He will come here beside this quiet pool.

MARY

Soon he will come? O, foolish heart of mine,
Be still! What woman, Rachel, will he meet?
Surely among these halt and maimed and blind
Ithomar does not seek his heart's desire!
Who is the woman of the trysting-place?

RACHEL

I fear you now with that uplifted hand.

MARY

Child, speak the truth or I will wring it from you.
No, no, I do not wish to be so fierce;
Child, lay your little hand against my heart
And feel its furious pace; now answer me!
Who is the person of his pledge to-night?

RACHEL

I, Rachel, am the person of his pledge.

MARY

With you and with none other?

RACHEL

Yes, with me,
For I can tell him what he craves to know.

MARY

His heart's desire, the thing he craves to know!

RACHEL

He craves to know where Jesus bides to-night,
The shining Stranger who is Jesus Christ.
Ithomar craves to follow Him to-night,
And hear His words, it may be speak with Him;
This is the news I hold for Ithomar.

MARY

The shining Stranger who is Jesus Christ!
Verily, I have never heard of Him.

RACHEL

Mary, do you desire to speak with Him?

MARY

With whom?

RACHEL

With Jesus Christ, that shining One!

MARY

Child, chatter not of one unknown to me.
Enter ITHOMAR, L.
Ithomar!
She springs up.
By what happy chance we meet!

ITHOMAR

If that be chance which seems determination.
Rachel, what is the word?

RACHEL

Sir, He will bide
At Simeon's house to-night beyond the gate.

MARY

You are cheating me with falseness, you and she.
You go to meet some drooping lily girl—
Nay, nay, you wear the brow of stainless truth;
Linger a while and let me learn from you
A little of this great philosophy,
I the disciple, sitting at your feet,
And you the rabbi, reverend, inspired.

RACHEL

Sir, He will bide at Simeon's house to-night.

MARY

And then when dark steals on us from the hills
We will walk homeward slowly to my house,
Captives of love within his golden leash.

RACHEL

Sir, He will bide beyond the gate to-night.

ITHOMAR

Mary of Magdala, save your golden leash
For Philip and the silken slaves of Rome.
Waste not your lures on one who loves them not,
Who seeks to solve the question of the world.
He begins to go out, R.

RACHEL

I pray you, let me walk and hold your hand
Until we reach my house.

ITHOMAR *lifting her*

Is this not better?
Exeunt, R, ITHOMAR *and* RACHEL.

MARY

Gone! lured by a limping, lisping child!
Gone! led by the crooked finger of a question!
Blindfolded by vagaries of a rabbi?
'Tis too fantastic-foolish to be real.
He makes a secret tryst with some fair woman,
And shall I wait while he beyond the walls
Toys with the tresses of that drooping girl?
Yes, I *will* wait, with vengeance fierce and sudden,
To quench that dreamy smile upon his face
And smother his last speech upon my lips
With the mortal, cruel kiss of expiation.

ACT TWO: SCENE ONE

Enter, L, DATHAN *and* JUDE, *two skulking and low-browed fellows.*

DATHAN

Here's the appointed spot.

JUDE

The man's not here.

DATHAN

There's a woman yonder.

JUDE

What of the woman? We are late in getting to our business and shall miss our reward.

DATHAN

Good woman, what do you know of one Ithomar?

MARY *turning*

I know little of him and that little not good.

JUDE

She is the mettle for us. She will give us the scent.

DATHAN

Yet it is wise to speak dissembling. Woman, we are friends to Ithomar and heard he passed this way.

MARY

You have scarcely the looks of gentle philosophers, friends to Ithomar. You are more like money-lenders or scurvy scribes.

DATHAN

So please you, we have business with him.

MARY

There is a stealthy flavor to your word "business" that smacks ill for Ithomar. The business that prospers best when lights are out and good wives abed. If your business is of that sort, may you prosper is my wish. He will get no more than his deserts, I swear to it.

JUDE

Where is he, then?

MARY

He went thither, to the house of Simeon beyond the gate.

DATHAN *to* JUDE

One of these jilted creatures she, and he, a woman-hater!

JUDE *to* MARY

You had best betake yourself hence.

Exeunt the men.

MARY

They skulk like dogs upon a carrion-track.
It seems that Ithomar has an enemy
And these the creatures sent to pay his debt.
I half regret to share their hounding him;
Rather with my own hands to pay my debt,
Wipe the score clean with one stroke of the sponge,
Laughing aloud, "Quits! I have done with you."
Enter, attended by officers, PHILIP, *the tetrarch, from* R.
Philip, O hear me!

PHILIP *to an officer*

Pray, who is this woman?

MARY

Philip, I cry for justice! Hear me, Philip!

PHILIP

Philip the tetrarch I, I deal out justice,
Whether in Auranitis, Trachonitis,
In rugged Ituræa or Philippi—
I heed the cry for justice. Woman, speak!

MARY

O, Philip, tetrarch, I must speak alone,
To you alone.

PHILIP *to his followers*

Pass on.

Exeunt followers.

MARY

in the hearing of the guard

Great is your name
In wide-spread Auranitis, Trachonitis,
In rugged Ituræa and Philippi.

PHILIP

in his natural tones

Mary, my Syrian goddess, what wild errand
Convoys you to this waste?

MARY

Revenge, revenge!
Revenge me on this insolent Ithomar,
This lying patriot of the Sanhedrin.

PHILIP

What freakish wind has veered the rosy flame
So lately leaping round his stony shrine?
Could you not melt him with your Cyprian fires?

MARY

It was a pastime that has turned to war.
Crush me the stone to fragments, mighty Philip.

PHILIP

My eager deeds have run before your wish;
Even now my emissaries lie in wait
To entangle him in violent dispute
With brawling Sadducees and Pharisees.

MARY

They were your creatures then, the carrion dogs.
What next?

PHILIP

The spear of Rome will end the matter.

MARY

But Ithomar is of such heroic mould,
'Tis easier said than done—to prick him thus
With Roman spear of common sentinel.

PHILIP

What would you, then? Philip is at your service
If Mary Magdala will pay the price.

MARY *scornfully*

Mary of Magdala does not beg for barter
That which belongs to her, O Cesarean.

PHILIP

Mark, I will serve you, not as Philip, man,
But Philip, head of Cesarea Philippi.

Ithomar, as you know—deny it not—
Inflames the Sanhedrin with mutinous talk
Against the imperial mother-city, Rome.
Are you, too, patriot, that you turn so pale?
We have the knowledge but we lack the proof.
Entice from him the parchment of that speech,
Entrap him in your house—this your revenge,
And Roman justice for the malcontent.

MARY

Turn traitor to my people to entrap him?

PHILIP

No other man but Ithomar shall suffer.

MARY

Promise me, Philip, head of Cesarea.

PHILIP

I swear, and you?

MARY

I win the parchment from him,
Before to-morrow's midnight moon swings low.
Set watch upon the dark front of my house,
And when the eastern shutter is flung wide
To shoot a stream of radiance down the night
Then let your soldiers spring upon their prey.
Dear is revenge to Mary Magdala.

Enter wearily from L, CLEO, *a pathetic figure of faded beauty.*

PHILIP

They will watch the signal of the open shutter.
Dear is revenge to Philip, Mary's lover.
Exit PHILIP, L.

CLEO *hesitatingly*

Is this, perchance, the pool they call Bethesda?

MARY

What barren wave has washed this remnant up,
The wasted ghost of immemorial trysts?

CLEO

Forgive me if I syllable amiss;
I am unlearned in your Syrian speech.
Is this, perchance, the pool they call Bethesda?

MARY

Mayhap she seeks to wash away her sins
Or some gray sorrow in the haunted pool.

CLEO

I am a stranger to this Roman province
And weary from long journey over-seas;
I think I do not understand your words,
Being overwrought and sick nigh unto death.
She leans for support against a wall.

MARY

Stranger she is to Cesarea Philippi,
A wanderer with a ripple in her voice
As alien-wild as some faint voyaging bird
Who lights upon a mast far out at sea.
Stranger, what do you seek, or whom?

CLEO

I seek—

I seek my husband, lost to me long since.

MARY

What is his name?

CLEO *hesitates, and then an expression of piteous terror comes to her face.*

CLEO

Ah, it has gone from me;
I have forgot his name; 'tis gone from me.

MARY

You seek your husband, knowing not his name?

CLEO

Whither does this road lead?

MARY

Into the fields;
Only two houses lie beyond the gate.
Go back to shelter and to sheltering friends.

SHUBAB *enters from* L *with a lantern and waits for* MARY.

CLEO

I have no shelter and no sheltering friends,
My husband I must seek until I die.
Exit CLEO, L.

MARY

Now what poor dusty simpleton was this?
Long will she flutter for that star forbidden
Until she beat her tattered wings to ruin,
A hopeless fragment of forgotten beauty
In the death-circle of some deadly lamp.
Scuffle and voices from R. *Enter* JUDE, DATHAN *and others in altercation with* ITHOMAR, *who holds himself aloof. They crowd against him.*

ITHOMAR

Back from me, insolent rabble!

ELON *entering* R.

The guard, the guard!
It is now almost dark. He claps his hands. All scatter, leaving ITHOMAR *and* ELON *facing each other and* MARY *leaning against the wall, her veil drawn about her. Enter four Soldiers,* L.

ITHOMAR

This insolent rabble has dogged my steps to-night.

ELON

This man molests the peace. Arrest him, guard.
MARY *steps forward and points to* ELON.

MARY

Here is the man, ring-leader of the brawl.
The guard lay hands upon ELON.

ELON

I do protest!

MARY

A dangerous turbulent fellow.

FIRST GUARD

Lady, he will not trouble you again,
We have bound him strongly.

ELON *as he is dragged off*

I appeal to Philip.
Exeunt Guards and ELON. MARY *and* ITHOMAR *look at each other in silence.*

MARY *laughing*

Pray, have you found solution for your question?

ITHOMAR

Philosophy has proved a surly mistress.

MARY

'Tis I have saved you, not philosophy.

ITHOMAR *tenderly*

'Tis you have saved me, not philosophy.

MARY

Did not the Teacher solve the riddle for you?

ITHOMAR

The doctrine of the Christ is too austere;
I listened and went sorrowing away.
'Tis you will solve my riddle, Magdalene.
SHUBAB *precedes them. They walk away, hand in hand.*

MARY *lifting the lantern*

Mary of Magdala, like this flame endure,
A taunt, a challenge, a loveliness, a lure.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE I: MARY'S *House.*
DISCOVERED—PHILIP *and* ZILLAH, *parting at door,* R.

PHILIP

Ithomar visits her to-night, you say.
And has she won from him the manuscript?
The court at Antioch must needs have proof.

ZILLAH

I think that he has sworn to bring it to her.
But Philip, Mary half repents her vow
And half she loves him while she lures him on;
Strike then to-night or you will strike too late.

PHILIP

To-night. Fling wide the shutter when he comes.

He takes the gold chain from his neck and puts it into her hand. Exit.

ZILLAH

dangling the chain as she crosses to L.

I wish I had the tetrarch for a lover,
With such gold chains to throw at every bush.

Enter, 2 E L, MARY *and* AZUBAH.

MARY

You smile as if you had a vision.

ZILLAH

I had.

Exit ZILLAH, 1 E L.

AZUBAH

My blood runs fainter when she smiles like that.

MARY

To AZUBAH, *as they lie together on the cushions of the floor.*

Tell me, Azubah, have I won his heart
Or loves he still that girl of long ago,
The Rhodian beauty with her hair of gold,
Whose fleeting likeness lay within my statue?

AZUBAH

Was she his wife?

MARY

I know she was his wife,
And that they sailed together from her isle

In that first flush of youth and joy and love—
Azubah, what would love like theirs be like
To us who have only trod the scarlet way?
Think you, Azubah, we could know such love
As blossoms in the soul of snow?

AZUBAH

Would God,
Would God I could untread the scarlet way!

MARY

But the great God who leads men by the hand,
Leads some to peace and others to temptation.
My lot was sown on thorny ground and hers,
Golden-haired Cleo whom he made his wife,
Was hedged about with flowers of quietness;
Let Great Jehovah judge between us two!
A silence.

AZUBAH

They sailed away, and then?

MARY

The ship was wrecked;
The wild Ionian gulf went over her;
Cleo was lost and Ithomar returned,
Gathered from bitter salvage of the sea,

To cherish until now her memory.
I did not dream such faith was left in man.

AZUBAH

And you, you would entice him to forget?

MARY

I love him better than my life, Azubah,
And that was long ago.

AZUBAH

Has he forgot?

MARY *does not answer but is lost in thought.*

MARY

Azubah, there shall be a duel this night—
Dead Cleo or the living Magdalene.
She rises.
Look, I will wear the semblance of the statue,
Standing all still upon its pedestal—
She goes to the empty pedestal, followed by CLEO.
The light is dim and I am robed in white,
And these white roses garlanding my brow,
She mounts the pedestal.
Just as the statue when he burst upon me
And cried out, "No, it is beyond belief,
The lifted brow, the soft elusive smile—
It is not you, O Mary Magdalen——"

AZUBAH

arranging her drapery

Ah, now you seem a marble moveless thing.

MARY

I hear his voice. He comes. Azubah, quick,
Lift up these folds across my shoulder, so!
A knock, two short raps, characteristic of ITHOMAR.
The same signal was given in Act I.
Azubah, hush! No word of me but leave us!
AZUBAH *goes to the door and lets in* ITHOMAR, *who removes his sandals while he speaks.*

ITHOMAR *gallantly*

Some pretty tale is lingering in your eyes——

AZUBAH

keeping her distance from him.

You wish for Mary?

ITHOMAR

What a shrewd surmise.

AZUBAH

Bowing as she retreats, 1 E L.
I go and search for her.
Exit AZUBAH.

ITHOMAR

smiling compassionately at himself

Mad Ithomar,
Lo, here you are imbued with all the creeds,
Inoculated with philosophy,
The woman-fever riot in your veins!
A whimsical contagion this, wise man!
As he moves slowly about the room his eyes fall upon the figure of MARY, *statue-like on its pedestal.*
. . . How marvellously the sculptor fashioned it,
Prisoning a soul within the insensate stone,
Binding her youth to immortality
And one fleet instant to eternity.
. . . Where is thy likeness gone, my Rhodian girl,
The smile of thine that only yestereve
Hovered about the marble mouth of Mary?
He turns from the figure, as if addressing another one
Cleo, I cannot now bring back thy face
Across the long stretch of the dreary years:
Cleo, forgive me if I do forget.
After a pause, he turns to MARY.
Dead Cleo, or the living Magdalene—
MARY *starts.*
. . . I could believe that her miraculous brow

Leaned downward like the moving of a cloud.
Mary of Magdala, speak with those pure lips!
She reaches out a hand to him. He approaches her slowly as if in fear.
A dream, a miracle, an insanity.
As he touches her hand, she steps down from the pedestal and goes to his embrace.

MARY

A dream, a miracle, but reality!
Now I believe you love me, Ithomar,
Me and none other, from the old dead past.

ITHOMAR

You and none other, Mary, perfect one!
They sit together on cushions by a low table, on which is a brazier of burning coals.

MARY

You are silent, wrapped away from me in silence.

ITHOMAR

There is no need of speech in happiness,
But here is matter if we must converse,
The manuscript that you have raved about;
I am half curious at your eager whimsy
To probe the dulness of the Sanhedrin.

He pushes the MS. to her across the table. She shows uneasiness.

MARY

My people's freedom is not dull discourse;
Perhaps I, too, am patriot, Ithomar.
But keep the manuscript within your bosom.
During the next few speeches the manuscript is toyed with, pushed back and forth between them.

ITHOMAR

No, take it from me.

MARY

No, I wish it not.

ITHOMAR

You earnestly besought me.

MARY

Woman's whimsy.

ITHOMAR

A nobler zeal to share a desperate cause,
I do believe.
He puts the parchment into her hand.

MARY *earnestly*

What is this scroll to me?
Pray keep the tedious thing within your bosom.

ITHOMAR

"Our people's freedom is not dull discourse."

MARY

Forgive me, Ithomar, my mad vagaries;
Verily, I desired it from your hands:
And now, in truth, I do desire it not.
A woman's fancy is inscrutable.

ITHOMAR *resentfully*

You mock me to the utmost of your power,
Beseeching me to give my honor to you,
And playing with the gift in feline fashion.
Was not the alabaster vase enough?

MARY

The vase I have not yet.

ITHOMAR

You have my promise.

MARY *gently*

I do not wish to rouse your wrath against me.
Listen, and we will read the script together:
"O reverend high-priest, O all ye elders!"——

ITHOMAR

Nay, but most gently!

MARY

Is there danger in it?

ITHOMAR

Cried out upon the gates, 'twould cost my life;
"Proscribed for mutiny against the Cæsar!"
Behold my trust in you!

MARY

But take it back.
I fear to hold the tool of your proscription.

ITHOMAR *jesting*

Nay, read it to me in your woman's voice.
There are no Roman spies in ambuscade.

MARY

"O reverend high-priest, O all ye elders!"——
A voice is heard outside.

VOICE

Make way!

MARY

dropping the parchment on the table.

Haste, you must leave me, Ithomar.
Some one is at my door.

ITHOMAR

For *some one* leave you!

MARY

Go, as you love me, go!

ITHOMAR

How desperate-earnest,
All for a casual *some one* at the door!

MARY

It is my mantle-maker, such a gossip,
She chatters like the swallow in the eaves
And scatters trouble like the thistle down.

ITHOMAR *lightly*

I fear her, Mary, more than armed men.
A knock at the door.

MARY

pointing to 2 E L

That is my chamber and the steps lead up
Unto the roof where I will meet you soon.
Exit ITHOMAR, 2 E L, *and* MARY *goes to* R *and admits* PHILIP. *She salutes him formally and he kisses her hand, endeavoring at the same time to draw her to him. She holds herself off.*

PHILIP *sneeringly*

Our bargain is not finished, I remember.

MARY

Philip, you come too soon.

PHILIP

Not soon enough
To keep pace with impetuous desire.

MARY

What is your wish with me, O Philip, tetrarch?

PHILIP *bitterly*

It pleases you to-night that I am tetrarch,
And head of Cesarea Philippi;
Philip the tetrarch, eh, not Philip, man?
So be it, and obey the procurator;
Where is that insolent seditionist,
Ithomar of the Jewish Sanhedrin?

MARY

He is not here.

PHILIP

You speak the truth to me?

MARY

Was it not I that laid this trap for him?
Why should I, then, conceal the man I hate,
Baffling my own revenge to baffle you?

PHILIP

But woman's mind——

MARY

My mind is constant still.

PHILIP

Where is the scroll, his mutinous harangue?
MARY *moves slightly to put herself between him and the table on which lies the scroll.*

MARY

All in good time the parchment shall be given.

PHILIP

Inexorably I hold you to your pledge;
The trap was yours at first, now also mine;
The vengeance yours at first, now also mine.
There is a sound in the adjoining room, 2 E L.
MARY *glances uneasily in that direction and* PHILIP *follows her glance.*
Whether you love or scorn this Ithomar,
Why do you stare so strangely at that portal?
Whether you love or scorn this Ithomar,
Who, loved or scorned, has come between us two,
I swear that he shall reap the penalty.
Swear to me, Mary!

MARY

I am steadfast still;
The man I hate shall reap the penalty;
To him I love, exceeding great reward.

At a sound in the adjoining room MARY *starts and moves to protect the manuscript.* PHILIP *sees it.*

PHILIP

The scroll of Ithomar upon the table!
I have proven your lie.

MARY

No, it is not the scroll,
The speech of Ithomar. It is another.

As they fence in words there is a constant play of action between them, PHILIP *insidiously to approach,* MARY *to ward him from the table.*

PHILIP

What is it?

MARY

A flimsy foreign trifle—
A verse that—Zaxus penned.

PHILIP

Give it to me.

MARY

No, no.

PHILIP

Ye gods, what bold effrontery!
Have it I will!

He springs forward. She, with as sudden a motion, takes from her hair the dagger-like pin, and confronts him thus, her hair falling to her shoulders.

MARY

Upon this dagger's point!

With her left hand she feels for the parchment, to convey it stealthily to the brazier. Her back is to the table.

PHILIP

Ha, you would murder me!

MARY

You and myself,
To save my people and my people's friend.

PHILIP

To save your lover!

He threatens to attack her.

MARY

Philip, O beware!
Consider how the Roman world would flout

At Philip, head of Cesarea Philippi,
Tetrarch of all these eastern provinces,
Branded across the face indelibly
By the weak fingers of a mocking girl.
She lets the manuscript fall into the brazier and it flames up.
Philip, beware!
He seizes her wrist, wrenching the weapon from it and flings her against the wall. She, breathless and gasping, hurls her words at him with difficulty as he goes to the coals and tries to recover the manuscript.
Ay, take your parchment scroll,
A ruined heap of ash, a burning coal.

PHILIP
wringing his scorched fingers
Pssh! You shall feel the scourge of Rome for this.
He goes to R.

MARY *laughing bitterly*
Run, put a poultice on your blistered fingers.
Exit PHILIP, R
MARY *speaks in a deep, changed voice*:
Now let the scourge of Rome fall, blight and scar!
I have saved from infamous death my Ithomar.
Enter, from 1 R L, ZILLAH, *with cautious curiosity.*

ZILLAH

You are alone?

MARY

I was alone.

ZILLAH

Oho,
The languor of this night oppresses me.
She goes to the shuttered window. MARY *rapidly forestalls* ZILLAH'S *purpose to open the lattice.*

MARY

Stop, Zillah, dare not touch that window blind!

ZILLAH *retreating*

Mercy of heaven, how you frighten me!
Look, there's a crimson mark upon your wrist.
'Tis blood.

MARY

'Tis nothing.

ZILLAH

going out, 1 E L

Play of hawks, forsooth!
I would not have a lover like a hawk.
Exit ZILLAH.

MARY

A hawk herself, a prowling claw-like creature.
Did she surmise the signal of the shutter?
Enter ITHOMAR, 2 E L.

ITHOMAR

I have waited for you years upon that roof,
Tree-tops and stars for silent company,
But not your eyes, your voice—How pale you are!
You tremble. There is blood upon your wrist.
What evil thing——

MARY

'Tis nothing, Ithomar.
A pin-prick from the fashioning of a garment.

ITHOMAR

The sharp-tongued mantle-maker plies her needle
As shrewdly as her tongue—
MARY *reels and* ITHOMAR *goes to her.*

MARY

My head is faint.

ITHOMAR

You breathe like one who suffocates for air—
He rushes to the window and throws open the shutter.

MARY

My God, my God, you have flung the shutter wide!

ITHOMAR *kneeling by her*

Take heart, beloved, wild beasts enter not
At open doors and windows in your house.
A clank of arms without and trampling of feet.

MARY

Ah, save yourself!
Enter, R, *a sound of Soldiers.*

ITHOMAR *rushing to table*

My manuscript. Betrayed!
The soldiers fetter him in silence.

MARY

Believe it not of me!

ITHOMAR

My manuscript!
God! Now my eyes are open, I understand.
Betrayed, betrayed, betrayed to shameful death,
Trapped by the bright eyes of a wanton girl!

MARY *kneeling*

Believe in me!
Exeunt Guards with ITHOMAR.
He shall believe my worth.
Unto this vow I swear by heaven and earth.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II: *House of Mary. Enter,* R, RACHEL, *limping, and seeming to lead* JOANNA *against her will.* DEBORAH *follows.*

DEBORAH

We should not let her little feet, Joanna,
Pass the polluted threshold of this house.

JOANNA

She begged to come.

RACHEL

I dreamed a dream last night—

JOANNA

She's always dreaming dreams and seeing visions.

RACHEL

I dreamed that Mary stood engulfed in dark
And called to me to come and lead her forth;
I hear her calling yet, "Oh, Rachel, Rachel!"

JOANNA

aside, to DEBORAH

She is possessed, that child.

RACHEL

I went to her
And led her to a hill of olive-trees,
And lo! upon the hill there stood a Cross.

JOANNA *going out*

I wash my hands of her and of her dream.

DEBORAH *to* JOANNA

Joanna, I will fetch her to you soon.
That little child is stronger than ourselves.
Exeunt both R.

RACHEL *looking about*

Her palace is all glorious within,
Like unto that king's daughter, clothed in gold,
Concerning whom 'tis writ in Holy Book:
"Her clothing is of wrought gold wonderful,
And all her raiment smells of myrrh and aloes;
God hath anointed her above her fellows
With oil of gladness and with grace of beauty."
How happy she must be in such a house.
Enter, 2 E L, MARY, *her expression sad. She does not at first see* RACHEL.
Are you not happy in this glorious house?
MARY *starts to perceive the child.*

MARY

Rachel!

She goes to her and embraces her affectionately.

RACHEL

Mary, I dreamed of you last night,
And so I came. But why are you not happy?
You tremble and your lids are wet with tears.

MARY

What did you dream?

RACHEL

I dreamed that you were lost,
And that you called to me to lead you forth.

MARY

You dreamed that I was lost!

RACHEL

Lost in the dark,
And calling, calling, till I went to you
And led you to a hill of olive-trees;
And lo! upon the hill there stood a Cross.

MARY

I am glad you came, for I am sorrowful.

RACHEL

Why are you sorrowful?

MARY

There's one I love
Betrayed to death, and I am his betrayer.

RACHEL

You?

MARY

Yes, unwillingly I was the creature.

RACHEL

Where is he now?

MARY

In prison at Antioch.
For his release I have moved heaven and earth.

RACHEL

If you have prayed to Heaven and do have faith
He will be freed, for Heaven is pitiful.

MARY

The Heaven I know is stony blind and deaf.

RACHEL

I have heard Jesus say: "If ye have faith
But as a grain of mustard-seed, your prayers,
Even of the little child, may move the mountains."

MARY

It is the good and pure who pray like that,
The pure in life.

RACHEL

I have heard Jesus say,
"The pure *in heart* are blest and shall see God."

MARY

Ah, Rachel, Rachel, you are but a child,
You do not understand the sinning heart.

RACHEL

I have heard Jesus say that though your sins
Be scarlet they shall be as white as wool.

MARY

Take me unto this Master, Rachel, child.
If He will wash my sins as white as wool—

RACHEL *rising*

Let us go straightway.

MARY

Nay, not yet, not yet!
Ithomar may return to me this day;
I wait for messenger from Antioch.

RACHEL

Then I will come for you again, singing
For sign to you beneath your window lattice.
Dear Mary, promise that you will obey
The bidding of my voice in song like this:

"Come unto Me,
Come unto Me,
Come unto Me all ye that labor,
All ye that labor and are heavy-laden.
And I will give you rest,
And I will give you rest."

DEBORAH'S *voice is heard outside.*

VOICE

Rachel!

MARY

I heard a voice.

RACHEL

'Tis Deborah come for me.

MARY

I fear the woman Deborah for her curses
That have brought woe to me and to my house.
Woe unto me on whom her curses fell;
I am proud no longer, I am humbled now—
I will beseech her to remove the curse.

Enter DEBORAH, R.

DEBORAH

Rachel!

RACHEL

Yes, Deborah.

MARY

rushing forward and catching hold of DEBORAH'S *skirt*

Woman, I pray,
I pray you to remove that curse you set;
You cursed me, saying I should accursed be
With madness, blindness, violent vexation,
With burning and astonishment of heart.
Remove the curse, remove it from my head,
Remove the burden of the heavy curse.

DEBORAH

Nay, verily, the curse is of your brewing,
For you yourself have trodden the vintage out
From grapes of wrath into this cup of trembling.

MARY

No, no, I do beseech you——

RACHEL

Deborah, come.

Enter CLEO, *hesitatingly, at the open door.*

DEBORAH

Another lost lamb straying to the fold.
Child, we will go.

RACHEL *to* MARY

Do not forget my sign.

Exeunt, R, DEBORAH *and* RACHEL.

CLEO

I saw him pass within the porch one day——

MARY

Saw *him!* Oh, it is you again, poor bird,
Poor dusty, wandering alien.

CLEO

Let me rest
Before I speak again—I am so tired!

MARY

leading her to 2 E L

Here in my chamber you shall rest and sleep.
Exit CLEO. MARY *returns.*
Perhaps she has a sorrow great as mine;
By day it follows her, apace, apace,
It sleeps with her by night upon her pillow,
It wakes with her in dawn's first glimmering light.
Enter 1 E L, AZUBAH, *her arms full of flowers, boughs of white almond blossom.*

MARY

We have no need of those.

AZUBAH

laying down the flowers

Take courage, Mary,
Keep a brave front before a scornful world.
How quickly men will say your hour declines.

MARY

I care not.

AZUBAH

You must wear your jewels to-day,
So to deceive the hard heart of the world.
Exit AZUBAH, 2 E L.

MARY

Be careful not to wake that sleeping one.
She sits in quiet, awaiting AZUBAH'S *return.* AZUBAH *comes with the jewels in her hands and arranges them on* MARY'S *neck and brow.*

AZUBAH

Now smile above the grief that eats your heart.
For when you laugh the world will laugh with you,
They say, but when you weep you weep alone.

MARY

Better salt tears than whited sepulchres.

AZUBAH

Women are made to laugh and to dissemble;
I have often laughed to ward away a tear.
Enter 2 E L, SHUBAB, *with flowers.*

MARY

Then scatter flowers as you will, Azubah,
And laugh to celebrate a day of doom.
Exit MARY, 1 E L.

AZUBAH

arranging flowers about the room

She is distraught with grief for Ithomar,
And sleepless nights have sapped her former courage.
SHUBAB *follows her, handing the branches to her.*

SHUBAB

This morning when I knocked upon her door,
Her lamp still burned—it was a sinful waste—
And she sat so—her arms upon the table—
AZUBAH *turns to look at his imitation and laughs.*

AZUBAH

In sooth, 'tis very much the look of Mary.
She continues her decoration. SHUBAB *takes the*

last branch and, after trying it in several awkward positions about the room, sticks it grotesquely in his belt and assumes an attitude. AZUBAH *turns, with her hand outstretched for the branch.*

AZUBAH

Give me the branch.

SHUBAB *childishly*

It's mine, you cannot have it.

He scampers away from her and she pursues him in the spirit of a child. A knock comes at the door and both stop. SHUBAB *goes to the door and receives a message. Returning, he leaves the door ajar and speaks with the air of one who has a great secret.*

SHUBAB

It was a servant come from Ithomar.
He said his master was released to-day,
Will visit Mary, she is not to know.
He will surprise her by his wonted knock.

AZUBAH

How glad I am, how glad I am for Mary!

MARY, *entering,* 1 E L, *finds them both laughing.*

MARY

You happy children!

AZUBAH

Happiness costs little.

MARY

The price of happiness is very small,
And so the world esteems it at its price,
With reckless hand, and loses it thereby.

AZUBAH

You would be happy if you had our cause.

MARY

with gentle reproach

Be happy with a reason of your own
And troubled not by my unhappiness.

Exeunt, 1 E L, SHUBAB *and* AZUBAH. SHUBAB *picks up the branch and waves it triumphantly as he goes out.*

MARY

If Ithomar should return, should be set free,
Would he accuse me as his vile betrayer,
Or would these days and nights of travail for him
Bring forth at last joy and forgivingness?

Enter quietly by the open door, R, ITHOMAR. *He stands silently till* MARY *sees him. She, too, is silent, hardly believing.*

MARY

Ithomar, you! I have dreamed and prayed for this.
Why are you silent? Do you still accuse me?

ITHOMAR

What are these jewels on your brow, your breast?

MARY

Gifts of my slaves, for no one is my master
Save you, you, you! Look how I fling them from me,
The gems of tetrarch Philip, spurned they lie!
I spurn them all, I hurl them from my life,
I'll none of them. Believe me, Ithomar.

ITHOMAR

Almost you do persuade me to believe,
With that knit brow and sword-flash of the eyes.
Where have you learned such seeming-elemental
Turmoil of tortured soul, tempestuous Mary?

MARY

I have learned from love, for love is elemental,
Not seeming-elemental, Ithomar.

ITHOMAR

Too great your simpleness to be believed.
Mary, you speak too simply for your sex.

MARY

My sex is my misfortune, not my crime,
Breeding in you such cruel disbelief;
Behold, all simply as a child I come,
Begging you, Ithomar, believe, believe!
Even if you cast away the love I give you,
Even if you scorn me for the love I give you,
Believe the love is yours, believe, believe!

ITHOMAR

Even before while I was yet in prison
You conquered me to uttermost belief.

MARY

I kiss your hand, my master and my lord.

ITHOMAR

I will return to you, bringing a pledge
Inviolate, to seal my love for you.
Exit ITHOMAR, R.

MARY *joyfully*

You almond-blooms, you voices of the spring,
He brings a pledge, a pledge inviolate.
She draws the curtains before the pedestal and lays branches before it.

Oh, happy pedestal to hold the vase!
Enter CLEO, 2 E L.
Poor soul, unburden your sad tale to me.

CLEO *sitting on the divan*

If I could only bring to memory back
The names of things and people long ago.
I feel like one who, gazing at the sun,
Has blotted all her world to shapeless dark;
So I, from too-long staring at my sorrow,
Have lost the sharpness of the edge of things.

MARY

What is your name?

CLEO

Even that I have forgot;
Sometimes it hovers just within my reach,
But when I clutch for it, lo! nothingness.
The empty motes dance in the mocking sun.
I lived on a fair island of the sea
Where marble temples rose, and statued gods
Were white and wonderful with outstretched arms.
The shimmer of my hair was like spun gold;
I danced and sang beneath the orchard trees;
There came a lover to this laughing isle;
His face was as the visage of a god——

MARY

Yes, yes, his name?

CLEO *dully*

I have forgot his name,
But this I do remember, he was born
In Cesarea Philippi, and he spoke
A Syrian tongue, amazing sweet and strange.
He married me in early blossom time;
The almond-trees were white as little brides.
We sailed away upon a rocking ship——

MARY *intensely*

And then——

CLEO

There came the rain and stormy wind,
Thunder and lightning and tempestuous seas,
The crash of riven timber, the suck and swash
Of water and a waste of human bodies.
I have never seen him since that night of horror.

MARY

Your name is Cleo!

CLEO

Zeus on high be praised!
Are you an oracle that you speak so well?
Tell me his name, you Delphic oracle!

MARY

His name?

CLEO

His name, that I may find my husband.

MARY'S *face denotes the terrific struggle in her mind.*

MARY

I cannot tell his name.

CLEO

Have you not heard his name? Do you not know it?

MARY

I do not know it.

CLEO

Then alas for me!
I have been in slavery these many years
With this one hope before me like a light
Gleaming adown a dreary corridor.
The light gone out, I shall not find my way.

MARY

Have you been true to him these many years?

CLEO

I have been slave unto a Roman master.
The master of my heart has been but one.

MARY

The pure in heart! I understand the saying.
Believe you, Cleo, that he, too, your—husband.
Has been a loyal lover?
CLEO, *as she answers, sinks backward upon the cushions and her voice grows fainter in weariness.*

CLEO

I believe it.
I gave him once an alabaster vase—
MARY *starts.*
Sculptured without in mystic symbolism,
Holding within an attar of perfume
Rare as the scent of grape-vines in the spring;
I sealed the vase and gave it to his hand,
Saying it was the symbol of our love,
And he should never lose or break the vase,
Nor ever part with it till I was dead
Or love was dead within his heart for me.

MARY

Or love was dead within his heart for you.

CLEO

And then the mystic vase should shattered lie,
Its rare perfume fled to the unthinking sky.

CLEO'S *voice grows very faint, fades away, and her head falls upon the cushions. Her eyes close as if in sleep.* ZILLAH *enters* R, *gaily clad.*

ZILLAH *shrilly*

Why do you sit in such solemnity?

MARY

Why do you spread your feathers like a peacock?

ZILLAH

Forsooth, this is the evening of your triumph,
When you have bid your friends unto a feast.
With a mocking laugh she runs to the alcove, draws the curtains to show the empty pedestal.
Where is the vase, the alabaster vase——
CLEO *sharply sighs.*

CLEO *in her sleep*

The light gone out, I shall not find my way.

MARY *in a hushed voice*

Do you not see I have a stranger here
Whose tired head is hurt by noisy laughter?

ZILLAH *going out*

And where is he, the worshipful——

MARY

Go out!

Exit, 1 E L, ZILLAH. MARY *goes to* CLEO *and arranges the cushions under her. She stands thoughtfully looking at her.*

Sleep, weary wanderer, fold your wings and sleep.
After a pause.
She sealed the vase and gave it to his hand,
Saying it was a symbol of their love,
And he should never lose or break the vase,
Nor ever part with it till she was dead
Or love was dead within his heart for her.
A pause.
And then the mystic vase should shattered lie,
Its rare perfume fled to the unthinking sky.
She walks away pondering. ITHOMAR'S *knock at the door.*
His knock! He must not see her, must not find her—
She conceals CLEO'S *face with a silk covering.*
I lied to her and I must lie to him.
To found my happiness upon a lie?
To build a house upon the unstable sand——
The knock being repeated, MARY *opens the door.* ITHOMAR *enters, followed by a servant with the vase.*

ITHOMAR

Mary, I bring the alabaster vase,
Glad symbol of our reunited love.
The servant holds the vase to MARY, *but she stands struck dumb and does not take it.*
Then from my hands receive it.

MARY

intercepting his intention
Nor from you.

ITHOMAR *signals to his Servant to leave them. He sets down the vase and leaves the room,* R, *with an obeisance.*

ITHOMAR

O Sphinx, unlock the riddle.

MARY

Ithomar,
She sealed the vase and gave it to your hand—

ITHOMAR

The answer of the Sphinx is still a riddle.

MARY

You told me once of—Cleo—and—her isle—

ITHOMAR

The long ago!

MARY

But should the long ago come back to life—

ITHOMAR

Waste not your thought on the impossible.

MARY

Nay, answer me.

ITHOMAR

shaking himself free of MARY *Grimly.*

Then have your answer, Mary Magdalen.
She was my wife, and you—are—what you are.

MARY *sinks into a heap on the floor and rocks to and fro, wailing.* ITHOMAR *stands with folded arms and an ironical smile on his face.*

MARY

God, am I not as other women are?
I would be loved as other women are;
Have I not yearned for wifehood's high estate,
Have I not burned for holy motherhood?
When Rachel's arms went round my neck that day,
Did not my heart cry out for motherhood,
Exceeding bitter travail of the soul
For little arms and little lips to cling,
And little feet to nestle in my hand?

ITHOMAR *coldly*

What new insanity is this, my Cyprian?
Come, take the vase and give me warmer welcome
Than tears and questionings and repentances.

MARY

passionately

The vase is hers, is hers who gave it you.
She points to CLEO'S *quiet figure.*
She sealed the vase and gave it to your hand—
ITHOMAR *goes to* CLEO *and looks at her, turning away the covering from her face.*
Saying it was a symbol of your love,
And you should never lose or break the vase,
Nor ever part with it till she was dead,
Or love was dead within your heart for her.
ITHOMAR *kneels by* CLEO *and after a while leans forward to kiss her forehead. He buries his face on her breast, but she does not stir. Then he rises and turns to* MARY.

ITHOMAR *solemnly*

Come here!
MARY *advances slowly as if in fear.*
Behold how quietly she sleeps.

MARY

Poor wandering bird, how quietly she sleeps!
You scarce would know her bosom heaved at all,
Your golden Cleo of the Rhodian isle.

ITHOMAR

It is the sleep from which there is no waking.

MARY *crying out sharply*

Dead! Then I killed her with that lie of mine!
Leave us alone together, Ithomar!

ITHOMAR

I have come from prison to your arms, O Mary.
Where shall I go, how shall I wait for you?

MARY

Where shall you wait for me?

ITHOMAR

There are two doors,
One leads to darkness, one into your chamber.

MARY *hesitates, looking from* R *to* L. *Then in silence opens the door to her chamber. Exit* ITHOMAR, 2 E L. MARY *closes the door after him and goes to* CLEO.

MARY

How changed her look since May-time long ago,
His golden Cleo of the Rhodian isle.

"It is the sleep from which there is no waking."
I am glad she does not know that he forgot.
She kneels.
I killed her, killed her with that lie of mine.
Forgive me, Cleo, for the cruel lie.
Dead face of Cleo, smile upon me once,
Smile once for sign you have forgiven me.
How sad and stern those patient lips of death!
She rises and goes about the room, gathering up the branches and heaping them on CLEO.
Are they as sweet as almond-flowers of Rhodes?
Dead Cleo, answer me:
RACHEL'S *voice is heard singing beneath the window.*

RACHEL'S VOICE

Come unto Me,
Come unto Me,

MARY *listens, goes to the vase, lifts it on high.*

Come unto Me all ye that labor,
All ye that labor and are heavy-laden—

MARY *advances a step or two to her outside door and then to her chamber door.*

MARY

Lo, shall I sell myself for this, this vase?

RACHEL'S VOICE

And I will give you rest,
And I will give you rest,

MARY *sets the vase down at* CLEO'S *feet.*

RACHEL'S VOICE

Come unto Me—

MARY *goes to the* R, *the outside door and opens it.*

MARY

What were those piercing words of Jesus Christ?
"If any man will follow after Me—"
She goes out.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE I—*House of Joanna, the Wool-Dyer. A plain and humble upper chamber. Window* R, *looking down on street. Door* C, *leading below. Door* L, *leading to bedroom. Dyeing-vats, a pole, lines across a corner with stubbs hung to dry, a pile of other stuffs ready for the vats.*

DISCOVERED—JOANNA, *wringing out garments.* RACHEL *on floor, playing with an Egyptian doll of wood.*

JOANNA

Rachel, I have a mind to call her again to see if she be yet stirred out of bed. Folk who wish to turn good may well begin by getting up betimes. 'Tis as much a shining mark of virtue as to pray long prayers on street corners.

Calling.

Mary, Mary!

MARY'S VOICE

Yes, Joanna, I am coming.

JOANNA

We will see how she relishes plain fare and the vats of the wool-dyer.

RACHEL

She has given away to the poor all her beautiful possessions.

JOANNA

All but that graven image of a vase. She hoards it in the room yonder.

Enter, L, MARY, *soberly clad.*

MARY

Lo, here I am, Joanna, for my labor.

JOANNA

You to help me with those white hands of yours!

MARY

Yes, for to-day a new life is begun,
And the old life is put behind me far.

JOANNA *confidentially*

What, then, of this fine lover Ithomar?

MARY

I cannot put him from my life, Joanna,
The thought of him. Is that a wrong, Joanna?

JOANNA

If he thinks a deal of you, as we plain folk look at it, to speak straight out of my mind without regard to what the learned rabbis might have to say, sooth, the best way for a woman as has gone wrong is to marry herself to any one who will have her, and after that to live as honest as ever she can. That's my say, but I'm only Joanna.

MARY

leaning against the wall

I fear—he does not think of me like—that.

JOANNA *picks up from the floor a soiled white garment and spreading it out between her arms, surveys it thoughtfully.* RACHEL *looks up from her play.*

RACHEL

Was that soiled raiment once all white and clean?
Why do you never steep them in some dye
To make the stain and soil all white again?

JOANNA

You can't make a soiled thing like this white again.

RACHEL

Why not?

JOANNA

There is no dye I ever mixed as will do that. When the soil and stain get rubbed in like this, they can't be made white again. It must stay soiled, or else—

MARY

Or else?

JOANNA

Throw it in the fire.

MARY *sighs.*

Is this your fashion of labor, my girl? You will have to learn from us humble people if you earn so much as your salt by the toil of your hands.

MARY

Forgive my idleness. I have not learned
My lesson yet of humbleness and toil.

JOANNA

While I have my hands in the vats here, will you go out on the street and fetch home for our dinner some oil in that cruse? It is clean gone.

MARY

I would go gladly, but I fear the streets;
I fear to be discovered by my lover;

I am not strong enough against his tempting.
Also I fear to be tracked down by Philip
And fall beneath the scourge of his revenge.

JOANNA

Has Philip the tetrarch cause to trouble you?

MARY

Ay, baffled hate and wounded vanity.

JOANNA

I will fetch it, then, while you keep the house with
little Rachel here.

JOANNA *prepares for her departure, taking the cruse and wrapping a veil about her head.*

MARY

And I will tend to your work, Joanna. When you
return, I will show you all I have done.

JOANNA

Let that piece stand in the purple a bit longer and
then wring it dry and spread it on the rope.

Exit, C, JOANNA.

RACHEL *springing up*

I am forgetting something, sitting here
And playing with a wooden painted doll.
I am forgetting I can run and dance.

Is it not wonderful to run and dance?
Was it not wonderful that He could heal me?

MARY *in awed tones*

It was a wonder and a miracle.
Tell me again those words He spoke.

RACHEL

He said:
"Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

MARY

I would I were a little girl again,
With you to enter at that heavenly gate.
Lo, have I not denied myself, O Christ,
And given all my riches to the poor?
What is it stands between me and that door?

RACHEL

Perhaps it is the alabaster vase.

MARY

Must I deny myself even that, O Lord,
Uttermost symbol of the love of earth?
He said: "Whoso would follow after Me,
Let him deny himself, take up his cross—

RACHEL

I am so happy this morning, Mary, because I can run and dance.
Play with me a little while. Run with me.

MARY

You dear child, I will play with you.
She leads her to a corner of the room.
We will start here, so, and see which reaches first that far corner. No, no.
As RACHEL *commences running.*
We must begin together. I will count. One, two, three. At the three, we run. Now! One. Two. Three!
They run and RACHEL *wins.*
You have beaten me in the race.

RACHEL

May little children run in heaven? Let us try it again. I will count. One. Two. Three!
They run and RACHEL *again wins, according to* MARY'S *purpose.*
I am sorry you lost again. I will try not to run so fast next time. What else do children play?

MARY *thinking*

I must think. I have almost forgotten children's games. There was a game we called "hunting."

RACHEL

What is that?

MARY

You are the hunted and I am the hunter. This chair is your house and here you are safe. Now I will pursue you and when you are tired you may seek refuge in your house.

RACHEL

I think I shall like this game of "hunting."

They play at it with many feints and subterfuges, till RACHEL *puts her hand on the chair, breathless.*

Home!

MARY *breathless*

You are safe.

RACHEL

Once more!

MARY

I have not run so since I was a little girl.

RACHEL

You are not very old, are you? You looked almost like a little girl when you were running. Joanna never plays with me.

MARY

Joanna! In truth, Rachel, you have made me forget Joanna's bidding.

She goes to the vat.

These were to be wrung dry.

She peers in doubtfully.

How shall I get them out?

RACHEL

Joanna puts her hands in and wrings them—so.

MARY

Plunge my hands into that fearsome liquid! Rachel! If I had a stick to lift them by.

She looks about, and while she does so there comes a sound of trumpets from the street. RACHEL *runs to the window and stands on the little balcony that abuts on the sill.*

RACHEL

Come to the window, quick!

MARY

I dare not come. I dare not show myself to all the street.

RACHEL

They celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

Such palms and banners! Such young men and
maidens!
Such silver trumpets!

MARY

Do you see Azubah?
But I forget you do not know Azubah.
If I could only find her, win her to me,
Win her away from Philip masterful,
The baleful star that dogs her destiny.
She approaches the balcony. RACHEL *makes place for her, retiring.*
Azubah! Now I see her, borne aloft
Like a fair idol by the tetrarch's side.
Ah, would she turn her head!

RACHEL

plucking at MARY *in fear*
That man has seen you.

MARY *waving her hand*
Azubah! she has seen me and she answers.
She returns to the room again as the sound of the procession grows fainter.

RACHEL

The wolf man saw you and he marked the window.

Now they have turned the corner. Now they
vanish.

MARY

Little Azubah will come back to me
And I will bring her to the Master's feet.
Perhaps even yet salvation is for her,
Though not for me, because my sins are legion.

RACHEL

Who was that wolfish man who glared at you?

MARY

I did not see him.

RACHEL

With the beady eyes.
Two teeth like tusks of swine, a yellow turban.

MARY

Elon! Elon, the parasite of Philip,
Of all my foes the most implacable,
Since that I trapped him by his own device
And sent him howling like a dog to prison.
She goes to RACHEL *impressively.*
Rachel, if any harm should come to-day,
Fear not for me, I fear not for myself.

RACHEL

Oh, Mary, Mary!

MARY

If the soldiers find me,
To apprehend me under Philip's ban,
Say not one word to them in my defence.

RACHEL

I am so strong I will defend you stoutly—
A sound of men's voices without. MARY *runs to the door and bolts it.* RACHEL *closes the windows and bars them.* MARY *goes to the vats and busies herself with work while* RACHEL *plants herself watchfully by the door.*

VOICE

In, let us in!

MARY *to* RACHEL

I swear they will not know me.
Speak not my name.

VOICE

We come from Philip, tetrarch.

MARY

Speak not my name; I am Joanna, dyer.

VOICE

as they hammer on the door

In, let us in! We come from Philip, tetrarch.

RACHEL

What do you want? This is Joanna's house.

VOICE

Unbolt the door or we will break it down.

RACHEL

throwing her little form against the door

I will not let you enter.

MARY

Let them enter.

Child, you will anger them.

RACHEL *withdrawing*

Then break the door,

But I will not unloose the bolts for you.

MARY

Rachel, for my sake, hide yourself. Stay not.

RACHEL

Nay, I will stay with you.

The door is burst open and several Soldiers enter, the foremost being JUDE *and* DATHAN.

JUDE

Where is the brat that barred us?

RACHEL

Here I am.

DATHAN

Leave her alone. Our quest is bigger game.
We come to seize one Mary Magdalen.
Where is she? Let us search.
To the others.
Guard ye the door.
MARY *stands with her back to them, stirring in a stolid way.*

RACHEL

This is Joanna's house, the curtain-dyer.
MARY *turns to them but keeps her hands behind her.*

MARY

It is Joanna's house and here I am.

JUDE *boisterously*

Joanna, Anna, Hannah, curtain-dyer,
It matters not.

MARY

Search for this—other woman.
They begin the search.
Much do I marvel at your insolence.
They pass into the other apartment and return again. MARY *keeps her hands studiously from their view.*

DATHAN *to* JUDE

This, to my certain knowledge, was the house

JUDE

They told us she was decked in gay apparel,
With stones of many colors and white hands.

DATHAN

This woman here who calls herself Joanna
She is not like to be the one we're after.

JUDE *ironically*

Joanna, the white-handed, the wool-dyer!

MARY

Now shame upon you to mock my honest toil!

JUDE

Doubtless we erred in singling out this chamber.

DATHAN

Yet do I marvel that they barred us out.

As they go out, they pass RACHEL *and* JUDE *raises his hand as if to cuff her.*

JUDE

It was this brat.

RACHEL *cries out in fear and* MARY *turns quickly, her hand raised in impulsive defence. The men catch a glimpse of its whiteness.*

DATHAN

Look there! Those lily hands!
Nay, they were never dipped in Tyrian dyes.
JUDE *seizes* RACHEL *roughly.*
The child will tell the truth: I'll force it from her.
Who is that woman?
She is silent, looking piteously to MARY.
You need not lie to me.

RACHEL

I will not lie to you.

JUDE

What is her name?
Is she Joanna or some other woman?
He grasps RACHEL'S *wrist so that she utters a cry of pain.*

MARY *stepping forward*

I am that Mary, called of Magdala—

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE I

ACT IV

SCENE II—THE PORCH OF THE TEMPLE—*Jesus has written on the ground and gone within the Temple, leaving outside the group of Elders with the sinning woman, who is* MARY. PHILIP *her accuser, stands a little apart, fiercely scowling.* MARY *is the centre of the group. Each man stands in the attitude and expression in which he was when the words of Jesus were spoken. Reproach, self-satisfaction, amazement, scorn, anger, guilt, are expressed. Some look toward the spot on the ground where the words are traced. An old man is deciphering them with his staff.*

PHILIP *after a pause*

Silenced so soon by your fanatic here,
With his mysterious writing on the ground!
She is upon your hands, ye priests and elders,
This sinning woman of your tribe and city.
Judge ye among yourselves the Magdalene,
The rankness and flamboyance of her sins.

Exit PHILIP *with his guard. The tableau is held for an appreciable moment. Then each man, in*

turn, goes to the writing, reads it in silence, and as silently passes out. RACHEL *comes dancing down the street, a song upon her lip. She sees the solemn group and* MARY, *with bowed head in their midst. She is hushed and pauses, her finger to her lip. The last man goes out, leaving* MARY *and* RACHEL *together.*

MARY

Come to me, Rachel

Rachel runs to her and MARY *weeps.*

RACHEL

Do not cry, dear Mary.
Look how He healed me of my grievous hurt.
Also He shall have power to cure your soul.

MARY

How fierce they were against me till He spoke;
"Neither do I condemn thee; sin no more."
But ah, He did not know, He could not know
The multitude of my sins.

RACHEL

Yet I have heard
"Though they be scarlet He shall wash them white."

Enter DEBORAH *from the* R *side of the roadway.*

MARY *shrinking*

Shield me from her, shield me from Deborah!

DEBORAH *gently*

I would not now condemn you, Magdalene,
For some of us in weakness lose our way
And some of us through hardness of the heart.
I pray to God that He may save us both.

Exit DEBORAH *into the temple.* MARY *looks at* RACHEL *with inquiry.*

RACHEL

rising to follow DEBORAH

She also sat at Jesus' feet to-day.

Exit RACHEL *in the temple.*

MARY

For some of us through weakness lose our way
And some of us through hardness of the heart.
If He has wrought this miracle with her,
Melting her stony hate to gentleness,
I do believe in His miraculous power
To wash away the multitude of my sins.

Enter, L, AZUBAH, *carrying on her shoulder the alabaster vase. She sets it on the step of the temple by* MARY.

MARY

Azubah, let us wait together here
Until the Christ come forth from out the temple.

AZUBAH

I hurried and my heart beat furiously,
For Philip followed hard upon my steps.
Enter, R, ITHOMAR.

MARY

Stay by, Azubah, help me to be strong.

ITHOMAR

Mary, my house and heart are open to you.
You that erstwhile have called me lord and master,
Obey the passionate mandate of your master.

MARY

I have another and a higher Master.

ITHOMAR

A ten days' foolish flare of infatuation.

MARY

Forever and forever, saith my soul.
A silence.

ITHOMAR

with a change of tone

Mary, my house and heart are hungry for you.
Take pity on me and relent, relent

MARY

I am filled with infinite pity, Ithomar.
For you and for myself and for us all.

ITHOMAR

Give then your answer to my thirsting soul.
AZUBAH *whispers and points to the temple door.*

AZUBAH

Mary, He comes.

MARY *lifting the vase*

I hold it in my hands,
Your answer, Ithomar, the mighty Answer.
The door of the temple opens and chanting voices are heard. The disciples come out and then a great radiance is seen that blurs everything. MARY *lifts the vase on high in the attitude of one who is about to let it fall.*
Take thou the vase, the broken vase, O Lord!

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY

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